2005 Anniversary Album

- I'm not a journalist but there's a reason I'm here
- 20 reasons for starting on top at 20 and beyond
- Hysterical history: Present at the creation (in creator
- Saving what others would not say
- Intimata pushed his luck and lost it all—and many rises

Someone is P200,000 richer but doesn't know it yet!

That's because he joined the recently concluded 20th Anniversary Treat Inquirer Platinum Circle promo. 20 weekly winners from July 17-Dec. 3 had received P20,000 each. The grand prize winner of P200,000 will be announced in 2 weeks—a Merry Christmas bonus to say thank you so very much to our readers.

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

AFP has not investigated Doble for wiretapping GMA

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Ric Zamora

THE MILITARY HAS NEVER INVESTIGATED Urlgr. Vidal Doble for allegedly wiretapping President Macapagal-Arroyo, Senate Secre...

Garci goofed, says Pichay

By Michael Lim Ubac

WAS THERE A GOOF?!! This was Virgilio Garcillano following the wrong wire?

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., President Macapagal-Arroyo's staunch defender in the House, says ...

Friday, December 9, 2005 • 36 pages / vol. 21 / no. 1

website: www.inq7.net

'Isafp 14-man team behind Garci tapes'

Doble's lover freely roamed highly restricted area

TOAST KAKAMPING SMILE. Marietta Santos, who admitted being Doble's No. 3, is a prestige-ranking witness at the Senate probe into the Garci tapes.

THE MANY FACES OF EVIL Organizers claimed it was the biggest gathering of women from all walks of life since martial law. Marching from Quezon Ave. to Plaza Miranda on Thursday, the protesters denounced the gender's collective wrongs and attacks globalization as causing poverty in the run-up to the ninth ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong to be held from Dec. 13 to 18. (Story in Metro p. Page 1[illegible])

By TJ Burgonio

IT WASN'T EXACTLY A place for lovers, but Marietta Santos summered in and out of one of the most restricted areas in the country and heard claims by her boyfriend about how he and 13 others had bugged President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Santos sheepishly admitted before the Senate committee on defense and national security how she had stayed in the one-story white building beside a manmade lagoon in the heart of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

The part- and party-23-year-old overcooked about the fancy equipment she saw in the lushly "blue room," purported generators of the controversial "Hello Garci" tapes, other TJ Vidal Doble said her when he was on duty.

Santos said a 14-man hush team was involved in the Hello Garci wiretapes. She said it included Lt. Col. Dodjie Samson Jr., head of Doble's military intelligence Group, or MIG 21; Emilio Ismael C. Capt. Windell Rebong, Capt. Ilan Zaggay, a certain "Captain Lt. C." M. Sgt. Wilfredo M. Sgt. Cuiba, Urlgr. Alberto and T/Sgt. Cuiaba, among others. She could not name the rest.

"Nandoon daw sila (They

Luisita, workers end 13-mo labor strike

By Blanche S. Rivera and Jo Marlowe Clemente

PEP Central Luzon Desk

THE 13-MONTH-LONG LABOR dispute at the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita finally ended yesterday following a PHP-million settlement, raising hopes that the union's management would still save the stock distribution option (SDO) agreement that the government opposes. Likely to render most award.

The major terms in the labor union signed separate memorandums of agreement with the Hacienda Luisita management which agreed to pay more than P48 million to over P1.9 million worth of claims of unpaid wages by the United Luisita Workers Union (ULwu) and a P25.5-million financial package for a new collective bargaining agreement with the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (Catlu).

The two unions said in a statement that they considered the 13-month strike when 13 striking

Sin, Yorac, 7 others enshrined on heroes' wall

By Ma. Cornelia Dayo and Lodge B. del Puerto

HERE MEN AND WOMEN WHO fought and died for freedom and justice will be honored today the eve of Human Rights Day.

In a simple ceremony, the names of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Haydee B. Yorac, Mercedes T. Ava, Julieta C. Antiva, Leopoldo Calma Jr., Antonio S. Rivera, Jacinto O. Peña, Crispin B. Tapanelda and Raquel E. Tañas will be added to the list on the Human Wall of Remembrance the Heroes and Martyrs.

The triad of inscribing names on the black granite wall surrounding the soaring bronze Gabriela monument in Quezon City's Bantayog ng mga Bayani are those who were part of the struggle during the Marcos dictatorship or who continued to work for freedom and justice and died after Edsa I—in an international.

But sadly, today one of them will have no one from his family to witness how much his commitment to being valued.

Despite its efforts, the Bantayog ng Mga Bayani Foundation failed to locate the relatives of Peña, "Jacky" to his friends, a reporter of the Secretary of the Philippines' Collegian who went underground during the martial law years.

"We cannot trace his relatives, neither through his former workmates nor through his former boarding house. We might not retrieve it," said Bantayog's Cathy Almendrala.

Vicky Segui, a longtime friend of Peña's, also tried to find his relatives in Bukidnon.

"Sabi nung iba, wala na daw sila. Pero ang sabi naman nung iba, may mga anak pa daw siya. Hindi ko alam eh," she said on the phone.

About two months ago, Segui

Peso rallies to 2-year high: 53.67 to US dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY RALLIED to a two-year high of 53.67 against the US dollar as strong foreign exchange inflows drowned out the political noise from the wiretapping and election rigging hearings in Congress.

Senator Juanmad ng Filipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the peso was pushed up by the consistent influx of remittances from overseas Filipino workers, oil portfolio investments and export sales, and the slack in demand for US dollars.

Asked whether the BSP was intervening in the Philippine Dealing System to slow down the peso's ascent as claimed by some currency dealers, Tetangco said: "Even if we're doing anything, nobody will notice it."

The peso opened near the same day low of 53.901 and gained ground throughout the day to close at its best-day high of

GMA approval rating drops to negative 30 in SWS poll

By Dec. Cabanungan Jr.

A STRONG PESO AND RISING stock market, falling oil prices and Malacañang's declaration that the "Hello Garci" scandal was a closed book failed to lift President Macapagal-Arroyo's satisfaction rating.

Her net satisfaction rating dropped to negative 30, far second lowest mark since the latter's term. President in 2001, second

Her satisfaction rating is the difference between the percentage of those who are satisfied with her performance and those who are dissatisfied.

In a statement, Social Weather Stations yesterday said that its fourth quarter survey found that 54 percent of the 1,200 respondents were dissatisfied with Mrs Arroyo's performance while 24 percent were satisfied.

The survey had a margin of er-

out of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

In face-to-face interview, the respondents were asked: "Please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the performance of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President of the Philippines. Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, undecided if satisfied or dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very satisfied?"

Mr Arroyo's satisfaction rating has been at a low fall since the third quarter of 2004 when spiraling global oil prices put pressure on domestic prices of goods and services.

SWS data show that Ms Arroyo's is the most disliked President since 1986, with a total of 7 quarters of negative ratings. In contrast, the lowest rating of former President Corazon Aquino was 7 percent, while that of Fidel V. Ramos was 3 percent and that of Joseph Estrada 5 percent.

INSIDE THE INQUIRER

One day in the life of a newspaper, one very long day in the life of a nation

By Nita B. Pizarro

Chief, Pep Desk

JULY 5, 2005. WAIT TILL THE LAY MANY people thought would be Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's last in Malacañang.

It had been 10 days since Mr Arroyo, engulfed by the "Hello Garci" scandal, had told the nation "I am sorry," and things were heating to a boil.

Through the eyes of the Day Desk

Day Page Ad for definition of Day Desk), this is how the Inquirer covered the longest day in Mr Arroyo's presidency:

July 7, Thursday

8:30 p.m.: First edition of the July 8 issue is off to press. Its headline: "GMA tells Cabinet: Quit" The night editor prepares the second edition. The editor in chief receives a late breaking development. Its in Inquirer 4 Julio L. Javellana. The editor instructed rushes to insert Julio's three-

paragraph news item into the banner story. It's about her parks a rooftop.

Palace sources had told Julio that eight Cabinet officials and members of agencies were locked out of the Palace ready to announce their resignation the following morning.

The editor in chief and the night editor decide not to change the banner but based on Julio's scoop, the deadline (the emphasis my sentence under the banner) is changed from

LIFTING ASSETS. Crane lights projects images of 20th anniversary logo on the Makati Shangri-La Hotel as the launch on Monday.

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

ENJOYWORK: Vice President Noli de Castro, the country's housing czar, and Tondo-born and raised Sen. Manny Villar shovel up some dirt during yesterday's ground-breaking ceremony of the Paradise Heights Learning Center in Sinoloan Mountain in Tanay. The community learning center is a joint project of Villar and the Paradise Consultancy. Amid the benefit of some 1,000 poor children in Sinoloan Mountain.

Sale of non-performing housing loans hit record

By Cynthia D. Balana

PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF the government's non-performing housing loans have reached P5.06 billion, prompting Vice President Noli de Castro to declare the sale a record feat.

Last week, De Castro said he turned over the check representing the proceeds from the sale to the Deutsche Bank Real Estate Global Opportunity (DBREG), which acquired the loans of the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp. to the Social Security System and the Pag-IBIG Fund.

It took four years to complete the sale, De Castro said, that the long wait was worth it, he added.

"This is a big boost to the financial strength of these two government institutions. It's also good news for you millions of members, who will ultimately benefit from your financial strength," De Castro said during the turnover ceremony attended by SSS and Pag-IBIG officials.

De Castro added that the transaction signified the government's strong resolve to address the problem of bad loans, particularly in the housing finance sector.

Military brass cool to Christmas truce

Vatican remains firm in stem cell, euthanasia row

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE VATICAN HAS PERSIST UP ITS POSITION on major bioethical issues—from stem cell research to euthanasia—with the close of its three-day conference in Manila.

"The threats to the incomparable worth of the human person have arisen, challenging man's very culture from the moment of conception to (the) final stages of death," delegates to the International Congress on Bioethics assured in a three-page declaration.

The congress spearheaded by the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life cautioned the door on pro-choice advocates who redefine human conception to suit controversial contraceptive measures.

"The human embryo is a human person at every moment of development, i.e., from the moment of conception," the declaration said.

It added our maneuvers such as the use of intrauterine devices which are designed to prevent fertilization. Critics say IUDs effectively induce abortion.

The congress maintained that "any legislative approach to overcoming infertility must respect the inviolable rights of every human being in life as well as the inviolable character and integrity of the conjugation."

It reminded the widely published notion that poverty was the result of overpopulation. It instead pressed the blame on the "unjust distribution" of resources.

"Population growth can be sustained by unravelling the natural processes by which man subdues nature and discovers the key to harnessing its bounty," the declaration said.

"The solution to these problems cannot be found in the promotion of contraceptive and the killing of the unborn," it added.

In the area of stem cell research, it declared as "not morally acceptable" the harvesting of embryonic stem cells from human embryos because the donors were killed in the process.

Only adult stem cells acquired from an adult donor are morally acceptable since the procedure does not harm the donor, the congress declared.

In 10 poor countries like the Philippines, the common bioethical issue involved organ transplants.

By Dona Pazzibugan

MILITARY LEADERS ARE LOATH TO RECOMMEND A TRADITIONAL Christmas truce with the communist New People's Army as they said the insurgents would only use it as a chance for their forces to regroup.

Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon yesterday said he would not be recommending the declaration of a ceasefire or a suspension of military operations (Asmo) this year.

He said the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, has in the past taken advantage of the ceasefire to forge pacts, consolidate and finalize plans for their offensives.

"Now that they are on the run because we have been pursuing their relentlessly, we do not want to give them (any) respite," Esperon said.

Armed Forces Chief Gen. Generoso Senga did not categorically reject the idea of a Christmas truce but was not optimistic it would happen.

"We may declare the ceasefire in the whole country or maybe in just some provinces. But it will depend on many factors, principally the prevailing situation and operations that are ongoing in the countryside," Senga said.

Senga said last week that he was open to a **declaring ceasefire in deference to the Christmas season** but said military operations, particularly in Quezon province would continue in the meantime.

Last year, the government declared a Christmas truce that started on Dec. 16, which the NPA reciprocated.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita the other day said Malacañang was hosting several thoughts about declaring a Christmas truce as the rebels had been quite aggressive of late.

The President extends the military top brass, including the major services commanders—the Army, Navy and Air Force—before making a decision on a Christmas truce.

At least 30 government soldiers have been killed and 90 wounded in fierce fighting with the NPA guerrillas, mainly in Quezon province, since the middle of November.

The string of clashes started on Nov. 19 when guerrillas used a land mine to ambush an Army convoy in Calauag, Bicol, killing nine soldiers and wounding 20 others.

Peace talks broke down in August 2004 after the CPP-NPA protested their inclusion in the United States' and European Union's lists of terrorist organizations.

Bishops: No fight with media

THE HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) does not appear to be bothered by a media critical of Church leaders in the wake of crisis.

In his first public appearance as the leader of the country's 1,500 Catholic bishops, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo was all praises for the media.

"I think you're very good, very good," he told reporters at the Manila Hotel on Wednesday when asked about his personal thoughts on the press.

Lagdameo, who succeeded the much criticized Archbishop Fernando Capalla on Dec. 1, didn't seem troubled by his press' growing disenchantment with the media, particularly the Inquirer.

Their chummy was manifested in soothing terms and, recently, in text messages with some bishops calling for a boycott of the Inquirer.

Bishop Jose Oliveros on Sunday confirmed he had joined the bandwagon, complaining about the reporting on Capalla and some bishops.

Earlier, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal had criticized the media for pitting

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Lawyers still want SC bets interviewed

By Armand N. Nocum

LAWYERS' GROUPS YESTERDAY asked the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) to rethink its decision not to hold public interviews of the three nominees for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

In a letter to outgoing Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., JBC chair, law groups under the Supreme Court Appointments Watch (SCAW) said the JBC decision defeated Davide's efforts to make the justice system more transparent.

While hailing the proposal to hold public interviews of the nominees as Davide's "landmark" achievement "toward the fulfillment of greater transparency in judicial appointments," it said the interviews' cancellation "curtailed the only existing effective venue" to involve the people in the selection process.

"The election to office of some government officials is now held in question. We do not want the same kind of doubt to haunt the next chief justice," said Marlon Manuel, project director of Alternative Law Groups Inc., one of the legal groups under the SCAW.

At a news briefing, Manuel said he wondered how Davide could hope to make the judicial system more transparent if he did not start with the process for selecting his successor.

Caving in to the 12 justices of the high tribunal who were not nominated, the JBC on Dec. 1 decided to scrap what would have been the first-ever public interviews of nominees to the post of Chief Justice.

"There are only three members of the court considered for nomination, so it is pointless to interview them anymore," Davide had said in justifying the decision.

Up for interview then were the three nominees of the JBC—Senior Associate Justices Reynato Puno, Artemio Panganiban and Leonardo Quisumbing.

The interviews are provided for under Section 1, Rule 7, of the JBC Rules, which were formulated on Oct. 18, 2000, two years into Davide's tenure.

Davide is retiring on Dec. 20.

The cancellation of the interviews, Manuel said in the letter, "constitutes a big blow to the efforts to enhance the transparency of the appointments process in particular, and judicial reforms in general."

"It must be emphasized that the appointment to the chief justice position is more important than the appointment of a lawyer to a judicial post, or the appointment of a judge to a higher court. Because of the nature of the chief justice position, one of the highest in government, it requires an appointment process that is correspondingly esteemed, a system that will give reverence to the position being filled," Manuel said.

Among the three nominees, only Quisumbing signed the letter to the 12 justices.

Those opposed to the interviews said, among other things, that since the 1987 Constitution was ratified, no incumbent justice nominated to be Chief Justice was ever interviewed by the JBC.

Instead of interviewing the nominees, they said the JBC should examine the judicial philosophies expressed in their written decisions.

Bolante on watch list

By Leila B. Salaverria

THIS TIME, FORMER AGRICULture secretary Jocelyn Bolante won't be able to fly to the United States as easily as he managed to the last time.

The Bureau of Immigration, acceding to the formal request of Senator Ramon Magsaysay, Jr., placed Bolante and two other Department of Agriculture officials on its watch list on Wednesday.

With Bolante on the watch list are Undersecretary Belinda Gonzales and Assistant Secretary Felix Jose Montes.

The Senate committee on agriculture, which Magsaysay chairs, has been investigating the alleged misuse of the department's fertilizer funds.

The three have been linked to the alleged anomaly and have been summoned to appear at committee hearings, but none of them have shown up so far.

Bolante returned to the country early this week after flying to the US in October. Critics claim that his departure was meant to dodge the hearings.

ConCom wants 'classical' unicameral

By Norman Bordadora

THE CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION ON Wednesday night adopted provisions for a "classical" unicameral parliamentary government with a prime minister that executes the powers of government and a president with mostly ceremonial functions.

Proponents of the parliamentary government in the ConCom see it as a means to stabilize the country's system of governance that has been rocked by coup attempts in the late 1980's and two People Power events that resulted in the toppling of regimes.

"Subject to styling and formatting, the commission has approved the shift from presidential and bicameral to parliamentary and unicameral," said ConCom chair Jose Abueva in a news conference in Quezon City yesterday.

"Instead of a separation of the executive and legislative functions (of government), these will be fused in the proposed parliamentary government," Abueva said.

Along with the view of many ConCom members that President Macapagal-Arroyo should serve out her term until 2010, Abueva sees the President staying on both as Prime Minister and President during the expected three-year transition period starting in June 2007.

"(This is) if the new constitution is ratified in a plebiscite before 2007," Abueva said.

Abueva told the INQUIRER that many members of the ConCom are not inclined to have terms of elected officials, including the President, cut as a result of the constitutional changes.

He has even proposed that elected officials with expiring terms in 2007, such as senators and congressmen, be allowed to serve until 2010 as part of the parliamentary government in transition.

The ConCom chair said a parliamentary system is more accountable than a presidential system since there is fusion of legislative and executive powers.

AERIAL SHOT of submerged Calapan, Mindoro Oriental taken from an Air Force helicopter shows the extent of the damage. Helicopters were used to conduct rescue and inspection of the area.

120,000 await rescue in Calapan

LUCENA CITY—MORE THAN 120,000 individuals are awaiting rescue in Calapan City following floods brought by heavy rains, a Calapan official said.

Dey Leachon, Calapan City administrator, said at least 62 villages of Calapan were under water after a Cessna spotted the villages from the Batangas-Mindoro beaches.

"We're in great need of more rescuers. If this kind of situation will last for some more days, we're afraid the lives of our people in remote areas would be in danger," the city official said in a mobile phone interview.

He said no casualty has been reported yet.

He said an estimated 30,274 families were suffering as a result of the rising floodwaters.

Leachon described the evacuees in front of the city hall as "still not anything."

He said the scale of relief goods could only last for a couple of days.

"Everyone is asking for food, medicines and dry clothes. We're really doing our best to cope with this emergency situation, but need help, badly," he said.

Leachon has appealed for assistance from the national government and the private sector.

The whole city is still without electricity and heavy rains continue to fall.

Ricky Valencia, a resident rescued again from Victoria town, 36 km from Calapan, said the swollen rivers atop Mt. Halcon compounded the flooding.

"The rush of water from the mountain put so much pressure to the river system," he said.

"Most of the families were already moving on the roof with their precious belongings. They are waiting for rescue teams to come there," Valencia said.

Mindoro and some municipalities in the province were taking advantage of the bad situation.

"They charge P50-100 per passenger," he said.

Col. Ralph Villanueva, commander of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade based in Mindoro, said they expect more rescuers from Manila and the adjacent Southern Luzon Command in Laguna City.

He admitted that the military rescue units in Mindoro also lack rubber boats to address the need for a massive evacuation of residents. —Delfin Mallari Jr., with a report from Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

3 Filipino militants held briefly in HK

By Blanche S. Rivera

IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS DEMANDED three Filipino activists for at least six hours in Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok Airport yesterday as authorities, on the lookout for possible "trouble makers," heightened security measures in the run-up to the sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization next week.

Dr. Carol Araullo, chair of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Elsa Lim of the militant women's group Gabriela, and Norma Dilay, vice president for international affairs of the labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno were questioned by immigration officials about their "WTO-related activities."

The three women are lead organizers of BIGAT WTO, one of two major networks of anti-WTO groups in the Philippines that are recognized by the Hong Kong People's Alliance (HKPA), which is spearheading planned protests actions to coincide with the Dec. 13-18 international conference.

Araullo, Dilay and Lim took an 8 a.m. flight to Hong Kong from Manila, but were kept in a holding area as soon as they passed Immigration around 10:40 a.m. yesterday, Bayan Secretary General Renato Reyes Jr. said.

Reyes said immigration officials went through the women's luggage and interrogated them on their purpose in going to Hong Kong. The officials gave them no explanation for their detention, Reyes added.

"All questions were related to WTO protest activities, but there was no legal basis to detain them any longer," Reyes said.

The Filipinos were released at 4 p.m. after six hours of detention. They were allowed to keep passport shots and souvenirs which immigration officials had earlier questioned.

"What they are doing to us is gross harassment," Reyes quoted Araullo as telling him. "We have not broken any laws in Hong Kong or in the Philippines. We should not be treated this way. We are here to speak on the ill effects of the WTO on poor countries like the Philippines. We are definitely not troublemakers."

Araullo, who was also active in the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, is scheduled to speak in a forum on trade and war at the Victoria Park Causeway Bay on Dec. 14.

The detention of the three Filipino came amid reports that the municipal Immigration Department and security consultants were keeping a "blacklist of 500 troublemakers" who would be denied entry into Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's Sunday Morning Post reported that while authorities had declared keeping such a list, the Hong Kong security and police chiefs were prepared for the worst and would screen people they think might cause trouble.

The WTO meeting is likely to see the biggest gathering of anti-WTO protesters from developing countries, who are fighting pressure by the United States and European Union on developing countries to further liberalize their policies on agriculture, industry and services.

A Filipino contingent of fisherfolks scheduled to leave for Hong Kong on Sunday has been forced to look for a new hotel after the Panda Hotel in Kowloon canceled their reservations at the last minute.

Kilusang Mangingisda chair Restituto Federico said the hotel had had "some trouble" with around 2,000 Bayanpanda-sparking in the WTO protests who were also billeted there.

The management apparently decided to cancel all bookings of those involved in anti-WTO activities, Federico said, adding his contact in Hong Kong had rebooked a rebuilding of their reservations.

Bulletin Marilo of SOMBRA BA said the concerns of these issues created by the IBM and Dambuang for an anti-WTO Global parade had also been lamented. Police have decided to call the florist parade, which is being spearheaded by the Philippine contingent and will include delegations of small fishermen from various other countries in Southeast Asia, Mantin said.

Newsbriefs

SoKor president coming

SOUTH Korean President Roh Moo-hyun will be arriving in Manila on Dec. 14 for a two-day state visit. The Korean Times website said Roh's visit was part of his "summit diplomacy" focusing on economic cooperation in Asia. Roh's regional visit to improve Korea's ties with Malaysia and the Philippines. Roh is currently visiting Malaysia where he will also attend the Asean+3 Summit in Kuala Lumpur. From there, he will fly to Manila.

—Nikko Dizon

'Dear Gloria, from Dulaya'

EX-PRESIDENT George W. Bush has written President Macapagal-Arroyo a "warm and personal" letter urging her to step up efforts to stamp out terrorism in the country. A Malacañang source said The letter was personally delivered by US national intelligence chief John Negroponte. The source said Bush thanked the President for her continued support for his global war against terror. He, however, stated the presence of foreign terrist groups in the country, like the al-Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah, could urged Ms Arroyo to continue pushing for the passage of crucial anti-terror bill.

—GVC Calasanjan Jr.

DepEd holiday guidelines

THE DEPARTMENT of Education wrote this week to officials about soliciting gifts from students and outside companies and organizations for their Christmas parties. The memo issued Dec. 8, DepEd Officer in charge Fe Hidalgo also said had "opposed pressuring public school children and their parents to make financial contributions for Christmas parties or gifts to be given to DepEd staff." She also reminded the public against contracts solicit money during the Christmas season.

—Jilson Pepe

Spain grants RP 10M euros

THE NEGROS and Cataga regions are set to receive some 10 million euros, or around P1.4 billion, most from Spain in the next three years, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday. A Filipino delegation that included President Macapagal-Arroyo's daughter Luli Arroyo-Quiambao met with Spanish government officials last week during the signing of the 6th PF-Spain Joint Commission for Cooperation Agreement. Spain is now the country's leading aid donor from the European Union. The DFA said, "The allocation of P1.5-billion during a year—will go to poverty alleviation projects and basic services in the two regions, counted among the poorest in the country.

—Rob Gutierrez

Bonus for DOLE personnel

DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment personnel had reason to celebrate during the Secretary's Christmas anniversary party yesterday after Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas told them they would receive P5,000 bonuses and other benefits. She said it is not exclusive to the DOLE as all government employees are expected to receive fifty months' salaries for the holidays. Also met with enthusiasm was Sto. Tomas' announcement that the DOLE will offer help of the Development Bank of the Philippines to employees who want to buy houses or lots by exemptions. Sto. Tomas also said the employees would be interviewed later this month about how much they would like receiving from the department's accumulated fund.

—Lala J. Salamero

US Embassy reopens

THE US Embassy in Manila reopened Thursday after being closed for two days due to an unspecified threat. Spokesman Kurt Matthew Lumantas said, "Out of an abundance of caution, we closed our embassy after receiving what it called a 'plausible threat' over the telephone. The caller gave specific details about the embassy premises, triggering alarm. The Swiss and Singapore embassies also received similar threats, according to media reports. Lumantas said the embassy will remain open on regular business hours. "We are back to normal and other our public services are open," Lumantas told AFP. "We made a thorough analysis of the security situation and we decided it was appropriate to reopen our public services."

—AFP

Corrections

IN YESTERDAY'S issue, a front page story—"Mass of GMA critics seek power breakfast for unity"—misstated that Speaker Jose de Venecia and evangelist Rev. Eddie Villanueva are opposition lawmaker. The two are staunch allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

* * *

IN THE jump of the story "In search of heroes, nation hails SEAG athletes in parade," on Page A8 of the Dec. 8 issue, the name of the Cagayan rower honorabilled Filipino athlete, with three golds, a silver and a bronze, should have been Miguel Molina, not Miguel Morales.

* * *

IN THE Dec. 7 issue, the caption of one of the photos should have read Dina Ilo, 1st runner of Binibining Lumbacao of Sanning. The caption of another photo should have read Norma Sinagpa of Dinalea for Toyota instead of just Dinalea Advertising for Toyota.

* * *

IN THE Dec. 5 issue, a story titled "Jim Paredes takes a different seat of Isha," which appeared in the Lifestyle section on Page D1, identified the subject in the blurb as an "ex-APO member." Paredes is still a member of the Apo Hiking Society and has never left the group.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writings to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Amorsolo Street, Makati City, fax No. 897-07-02-94, e-mail address <day.desk@inquirer.com.ph>

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Letters Editor Nick, mail address, e-mail address <nvalencia@inquirer.com.ph> or fax No. 897-07-02-94. Ann Reader's Advocate. Her phone number is 897-0800, local 442.

Zobel family matriarch dies in Spain; 98

MERCEDES ZOBEL MCMICKING, EMERITA of the Zobel family in the postwar years, passed away in Sotogrande, Spain, on Dec. 3 in Chicago at 98.

Between 1929 and 1946, McMicking was a partner in Ayala y Compañía before becoming a director of Ayala Securities Corp.

Known for her quiet leadership, McMicking was an important decision-maker in the corporation and was credited on the most crucial appointments.

Born in Manila on May 5, 1907, she married Col. Joseph McMicking, a United States (na-Bigaan) officer, on April 16, 1931. Colonel McMicking is credited with being the brains behind the development of modern Makati after World War II.

Perhaps more than her business interests, Mercedes McMicking dotted on the civic organizations she founded and supported.

She was an incorporator of White Cross, a home for orphans and children of tuberculin patients. Today, White Cross houses and cares for nearly 600 children.

Along with her husband, Mrs. McMicking in 1961 founded the Filipino Foundation Inc., one of the first corporate foundations in the country.

It is now known as the Ayala Foundation Inc., the institutional development arm of the Ayala group of companies.

She was also active in religious organizations such as the Catholic Women's League, Damas de Caridad, Cuerpo de Adoradoras, Don Bosco schools and charities, and Tuloy Foundation Inc., among others.

In 1957, she was conferred the title of Lady of the Holy Sepulchre by the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, in recognition of her service as a Catholic lay leader.

Jaime Zobel de Ayala, her nephew and chair of the Ayala group of companies, said: "We deeply mourn her passing. She was a guiding spirit for the family and an embodiment of wisdom and strength."

McMicking lived in the Philippines most of her life. In recent years, she moved to Spain but returned to the Philippines every year to check on her civic projects. It was her wish to be buried in the Philippines, the country she always considered home. Her body will be flown to from Spain for funeral arrangements still have to be finalized.

Funeral Mass will be held on Saturday at 9:15 a.m. at the Sanctuario de San Antonio at the San Pedro in Makati.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday December 9, 2005
23rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 48, 17-19
Gospel: Matthew 11, 16-19

Jesus said to the crowds, "How, to what can I compare the people of this day? They are like children sitting in the marketplace, who call out to their companions: 'We played the flute for you but you would not dance. We sang a funeral song but you would not cry!'

"For John came fasting and people said: 'He is possessed.' Then the Son of Man came, he ate and drank, and people said: 'Look at this man! A glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet the outcome will prove Wisdom to be right."

Commentary

We keep returning to one need for conversion: to stop judging others and to exercise the right to live as those intent on the coming of God in history and our lives. Are we acting more like children sitting in the marketplace complaining and whining and finding fault with everything? Are we only the spectators and not the participants? Are we only for having fun? Are we like those offended at the preacher—unable to see the call to change for making peace with our neighbor, calling for forgiveness and reaching out to those around us like we were doing? Is there any Wisdom revealed in our words and actions? Wisdom, come and lay there our minds and souls that we might be a friend to God who is a friend to sinners.

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Luisita, workers end 13-month labor strike

From page A1

workers and supporters killed, "a historic victory for the people of Hacienda Luisita."

In the bag

"The workers and the people of the hacienda have proven that they can withstand the combined might of one of the most powerful clans in the country and the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the Arroyo government and be able to decisively end the strike with all their major demands in the bag," they said.

The estate management also agreed to take back 34 dismissed union officers of Catlu and 52 retrenched officers and members of Ulwu.

Ulwu president Rene Galang and Catlu spokesperson Rene Tiu honored the 13 workers and supporters who died in the military and police strike dispersal operation last year and other strike-related violence.

"On this occasion, we pay tribute to the 13 martyrs of Hacienda Luisita whose supreme sacrifice made possible the victory of the people of the hacienda," they said.

Saving SDO

With the controversial labor issue behind it, Hacienda Luisita Inc., the corporation that manages the 4,915-hectare sugar estate owned by the family of former President Corazon Aquino, yesterday expressed confidence that it could work out a solution to save the 16-year-old SDO agreement between the Cojuangcos and the estate's workers.

HLI lawyer Vigor Mendoza II said the agrarian reform issue would now be easier to solve because the labor problems that gave rise to the farmers' clamor for the revocation of the SDO and for land distribution had been settled.

"The SDO itself is not bad, it may just need improvement. We're exploring options. Maybe their [the farmers'] ownership of land can exist side by side with their employment in the HLI. Maybe we just need to revise the SDO," he said.

In two referendums in 1989, 96 percent of the almost 6,000 Hacienda Luisita farmers voted for the SDO scheme under which they would be given shares in HLI instead of actually acquiring ownership of the land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

Investigation

The government last year initiated an investigation into the farm workers' allegations that the estate management had violated various provisions of the SDO agreement.

Task Force Luisita created by the Department of Agrarian Reform recommended the cancellation of the SDO and the distribution of the sugar estate to the farm workers.

A validation committee formed by the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council to review the task force's findings voted on Tuesday to uphold the DAR's recommendation to cancel the Luisita SDO agreement.

The committee will submit its final resolution to the 25-member PARC executive committee which will vote on the Luisita case on Dec. 13.

Final say

The PARC, which is chaired by President Macapagal-Arroyo, is the highest decision-making body on agrarian reform issues and has the final say on SDO revocations.

Mendoza said a PARC decision on the Luisita SDO may only complicate matters and make it harder for both sides to come to an agreement.

"It will make things more difficult. We will be filing cases and that will take a long time. We don't solve the problem [that way]," he said.

The hacienda management told a PARC hearing on Nov. 22 that it did not recognize the DAR's jurisdiction on the Luisita case and that it would question in court any unfavorable decision against the estate.

Mendoza said the government should give the HLI management and the farm workers more time to work out an agreement on the SDO issue before coming out with its final decision.

Toward amicable settlement

"Perhaps with a little tinkering with the SDO, we can improve it. The point of the DAR in revoking the SDO, after all, is that the farmers' lives had been miserable. Maybe we can improve that," Mendoza said.

He said the two parties could enter into an amicable settlement as they did on the labor issue, and show the government that the SDO could be retained.

"These farmers are organized unions. They have lawyers and consultants. It's not as if they don't know what they're doing," Mendoza said.

Catlu and Ulwu said the end of the strike was but "one chapter in the struggle of the hacienda people."

"The strike has paved the way for the revocation of the stock distribution option in the hacienda. We will continue to cultivate the land and work for its eventual transfer of ownership to the people," they said.

Marathon sessions

The hacienda management and the two unions hammered out the terms of the agreement to settle the labor dispute in marathon negotiations on Monday at the United Church of Christ in the Philippines compound in Quezon City.

The unions said the most sensitive issues that took time to resolve were the reinstatement of the dismissed union officers and members and the recognition of the two unions as the sole bargaining agents of the workers.

Under the memorandums of agreement, Ulwu and Catlu would remain the bargaining agents of the hacienda workers.

The new CBA for Catlu was signed yesterday while negotiations for a new CBA for Ulwu will follow as plantation operations normalize.

The agreements also gave Ulwu the right to harvest and get the proceeds from the standing sugarcane crop worth about P30 million.

Financial aid

In addition, Ulwu chapters in the 10 barangays comprising the hacienda will receive P200,000 each as financial assistance for crop production.

The plantation workers will retain all their rights as stockholders of HLI.

Catlu's P21-million financial package in a new CBA includes a daily wage increase of P15—retroactive to July 1, 2004 until the end of the strike, a signing bonus of P13,000, Christmas bonus and other benefits.

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Former

By Nelson F. Flores

THE SANDIGANbayan 4th Division yesterday sentenced to a brief prison term a former mayor of Capas, Tarlac, for failing to settle P1 million worth of disallowed cash advances.

Sentenced to jail for a period of eight to 20 months was Hermes Frias Sr. who was found guilty of violating Article 218 provision of the Revised Penal Code on the "failure of an accountable officer to render accounts."

The division's presiding justice, Associate Justice Gregory Ong, said the prosecution had sufficiently established that "Frias failed to render an accounting to the Commission on Audit for a period of two months after such accounts should have been rendered."

Court records show that sometime in 1997, the Tarlac provincial auditor Lualhati Abesamis conducted a cash count and audit of the financial statements of Capas, particularly Frias' cash advances.

Disallowed

During the audit examination, Abesamis disallowed the amounts of P50,000 and P950,000 covered by two disbursement vouchers filled out by Frias.

Despite several demands, Frias failed to make the required liquidation.

The records also showed that before the audit examination of Frias' cash advances, Abesamis discovered a shortage in the cash accounts of municipal treasurer Norma Panganiban amounting to P3.4 million.

Abesamis found that part of the money that Panganiban supposedly returned came from Frias' unliquidated cash advance of P950,000.

In his defense, Frias said the money had been legally spent and that he did not benefit from it.

He also explained that the P50,000 was used for the purchase of supplies and materials for the maintenance of the Capas public market and that the P950,000 was used to meet certain obligations incurred by the municipal government.

Frias admitted having the notice of disallowance sometime in 1998 but was not able to make the required liquidation, claiming it "escaped [his] mind."

He said he was busy preparing for his reelection campaign at the time. After being reelected, however, he was charged with murder and detained for three years and 10 months before being acquitted. He said he was preoccupied with his defense and thus overlooked the notice of liquidation.

No defense

But the anti-graft court said that whether Frias benefited from the transaction was irrelevant as "benefit on the part of the accused" was not an essential element of the felony he was being charged with.

One day in the life of a newspaper

From page A1

"President calls for shift in parliamentary system" in "President preempts pleas to move out position."

10:00 p.m. The final editions of the July 8 issue is put to bed.

11 p.m. Some editors and reporters have a late dinner briefing with an opposition senator somewhere in Makati. He confirms suspicions that key officials are leaving Ms Arroyo's Cabinet the following morning. He provides more details—and names.

Talk of a mass resignation in the Cabinet, supposed to trigger Ms Arroyo's downfall, had been percolating the last 48 hours. She had apparently got wind of the plan and announced a Cabinet revamp.

11:50 p.m. One of the editors at the dinner gets a tip that an Press Secretary Ignacio wants to see Presidential Security in suit hair to visit Cookie Mirasol, a newspaper editor assigned to the Day Desk, and its reporters.

July 8, Friday

7:00 a.m. The editor in chief calls Cookie, talks to her about the possible demise of the day's coverage and tells her to make sure all bases are covered. It would be the first of many calls that day from the editor in chief before she gets to the office.

8 a.m.: Cookie calls Reporter 1 in Jamora, Palace reporter Christine Avendaño and Finance reporter Michelle Soto. She fills them in on the planned [we're not sure it will happen at this time] 10 a.m. press conference by the opposing Palace officials (now known as the Hyatt 10). They get their assignments keeping in mind the ramifications of the event and how it should be covered.

Metro Desk reporter Jocelyn Uy is assigned to keep watch around the Hyatt premises. All reporters are told to expect the unexpected.

8:15 a.m. Cookie calls Palace Reporter 2 Gil Cabacungan Jr. and tells him to stand by in Malacañang. Legal del Puerto, at Camp Crame and Dona Nuestrogan, at Camp Aguinaldo, are instructed to monitor movements in the police and military camps. Jaime Laude [Senate], with TJ Burgonio (Senate), as well as Bonnie reporters Mike Lluz and Philip Tubeza, are assigned to stick close to their beats. They advance the hunch the Day Desk doesn't want to miss out on anything. But on that day.

10 a.m. The President's core economic team, led by Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, announces at a press conference at the Hyatt—just as the Inquirer reporters' duty meeting—their immediate resignations. They call on Ms Arroyo to step down and give way to Vice President Noli de Castro.

Our reporters call in that the military and the police have placed Metro Manila under the highest state of alert. The military says it will stay neutral.

Senate Hall, other editors suggest into the newsroom earlier than usual. They monitor the fast-breaking developments, make telephone calls to their own news sources, scour the news wires and the TV news.

The two TV sets in the news room are no longer enough. A third set is wheeled into the editors' desks.

One editor has an ear glued to the radio and the other to the phone, while also keeping his eyes fixed on the TV screens. He is also thanking a tape recorder, transcribing interviews caught on radio and TV.

The four phones at the Day Desk don't seem to be adequate to accommodate incoming and outgoing calls. I am looking at the large picture with the other editors and researching with the editor in chief on the possible angling of the stories. While we are still editorializing, we know this thing about covering our readers' attention—the significant selling details in news stories, the basics for them to understand what is going on in the country. No mindless objectivity for the hoyoyo.

11:08 a.m. Day Desk meets for pre-story conference. On deck are Associate Editor Chito Estrellado, Inq deJ Manila, another wire reporter who skipped his regular training day to help out, Ruben Alabastro, Cookie and Day Desk Chief Nilo Divina.

While they meet, Gil calls from the Palace to report that Ms Arroyo is presiding over a meeting of Cabinet of her Cabinet.

Gil tells the Desk that the Vice President is present at the Palace meeting. Reporter 1 quickly and decisively indicates De Castro has not defected. Reporter 4 Cynthia Balana is assigned to keep an eye on De Castro's movements.

At the Day Desk discussions, ideas fly. Editors agree on one thing: avoid the litany of developments, reporters must give the Desk a sense of what's happening behind the scenes. Need for "inside information."

Questions come fast: What's the mood in Malacañang? Where's GMA? Are there unusual troop movements? What's the appeal—can we tell? Where are the "usual suspects"? Are any of GMA political opponents right? Any reactions from Big Brother, the US Embassy? What's the activist in the provinces? Our 300 correspondents throughout the country are on their toes.

11:39 a.m.: Cookie solicits the editorial reactions to the resignations. One reporter is told to keep close watch at the airport for any unusual movements. It is true a plane is on standby to fly Ms Arroyo out of Manila? Some reporters call in our by texts as minutes, usually a two-paragraph outline of stories from their beats.

11:45 a.m.: News summaries from the provinces start coming in, earlier than usual.

1:30 p.m.: Advertising finalizes page dummies. Day Desk tells Ad not using as much space for news. The strained happens. Advertising yields.

Most editors come in.

1:40 p.m. Loyal Cabinet officials, led by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, declare their support for the President. House Speaker Jose de Venecia joins them.

1:50 p.m.: Between phone calls, Cookie prepares the story lineup containing the reporters' beats assignments. The lineup is to be distributed to each editor for discussion at a noted table news conference. The conference will draw nine which stories will be published the following day and on what pages.

2:40 p.m.: Discussions are distributed to section editors so they could plan and lay out their pages.

2:40 p.m.: What comes in that hot: Manuel Villar is meeting with businessman Ferry members. A reporter calls in about Villar's party meeting. The Day Desk dismisses what he's to resign or not.

2:50 p.m.: Cookie finalizes the story lineup.

3:40 p.m.: Desk is alerted that former President Aquino is holding a press conference soon. Heads for it on TV. And here she is, appearing to Ms Arroyo to make the "supreme sacrifice." She says GMA rejected the idea when she raised it in private the night before.

No one for the weary. Almost the only break editors can get—aside from the occasional puff of cigarette smoke in the lobby of the 3rd floor newsroom. The tanks of ash trays pile up with mounds of cigarette butts, some smeared with lipstick.

After Cory Aquino, the Makati Business Club and the Financial Executives Inst one of the Philippines also urge GMA to resign.

The liberal party position, Sen. Franklin Drilon, withdraws support from Ms Arroyo, also calls on her to step down. One editor summons reader his breath: This is it, she's done.

Then, the news that Mayor Lito Atienza, LP chair, goes on the air. What Drilon said is not true. LP has made no such party stand, Atienza claims. So, the LP is split.

5:00 p.m. News Editor Jun Engracia is in charge of closing Page 1 of the day's top reporters' story conference. Each holding a think ahead of papers concerning the reporters' news summaries. He editors talk about the stories of each story in strength, its weaknesses.

They decide which stories will appear on the front page, which in the inside pages. Which can be put on hold. Ideas are tossed around. There are no opinions specifically ban.

A senior photographer comes in with a handful of photographs for the editors to choose from.

Finally, seven stories are selected for Page 1. The front page lineup includes a blank piece by business columnist Amando Doronila. He article should help readers make sense out of the day's rapid developments that spell political uncertainty.

5:34 p.m.: The story list is done. The tabloid assigned to handle the front page for the day coordinates with the editor in chief. The photo editor and the Art Section to laying out the Page One look.

6:00 p.m.: Stories are farmed out to particular editors for processing. Reduced stories are merged and whopped into single stories.

8 p.m.: Most of the stories are electronically routed to the TV sets. Former President Fidel V. Ramos has arrived at Malacañang. He assures Ms Arroyo of his "unwavering support." But he also proposes a "graceful exit" for her.

9:30 p.m.: It tip comes in that Ms Arroyo is leaving the Palace. Town editor calls reporter Nikko Dizon at the airport. There's a rumor that Ms Arroyo is flying out. We hear rumors she might go to Cebu. Check all places—commercial and private.

The word comes in: The Presidency is going to make Hotel Intercontinental, also at the Makati Avenue, the temporary seat of government.

9:40 p.m.: Ms Arroyo again rejects all calls for her resignation. Subscribing announces temporary replacements for resigned Cabinet officials. The President gets another boost when the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry says it opposes any move to force her to step down.

The latest newsbreaks mean more work for the editors.

9:50 p.m.: Senate Pres. Villa, which other Inquirer reporters are closely watching for any gathering of people—are seen on his Toronto route in the newsroom—somewhere.

9:00 to 7:30 p.m.: The Malacañang House of Representatives Assembly asks, tweets and keeps and tweets reporters.

Opposition leaders and different party groups start converging on Ayala Avenue. Inquirer reporters and photographers are on the scene, monitoring for any signs of People Power. On cue, editors pounce. The may have to change the entire Page 1. So changes until deadline for the first editions.

The news day is done.

Cookie starts calling reporters about the next day's news assignments.

8:00 to 8:30 p.m.: The Stone Desk makes last minute changes on Page 1 stories to update them. The last photo captions are refined.

8:30 to 9:30 p.m.: Under the direction of the editor in chief, the night editors oversees late-breaking news. Corrections to the first edition are made.

10 p.m.: Final edition rolls off the presses.

July 9, Saturday

12 midnight: Lights still on in the newsroom, the night editor watches for any late breakers.

2 a.m. Hot off the presses and still smelling of soya ink, copies of the Inquirer are loaded onto trucks for delivery to the north and south of Manila. (We have presses in Davao and Cebu.)

2 to 6 a.m.: As the nation sleeps, over 250,000 copies of the Inquirer are being delivered around the country by land, sea and air.

The headline screams: I WILL NOT RESIGN.

What is a Day Desk?

IN THE WORLD OF NEWSPAPERS, if to a small group of three or four editors who come in earlier than the rest of the staff. It's headed by a Chief (Editor) or Supervisor (reporter). Whenever necessary, as in big breaking news or major coverages, it's backed up by by some senior editors.

Its functions:

- determines all the possible news events scheduled for the day
- anticipates events, its consequences/ramifications
- stay on top of news, particularly "breaking news"
- goes for back-line news and photo coverage, deciding which reporter should cover a particular event
- determines if a bank or graphics are needed for stories. "Flashbacks," "backbacks," "in the know," etc., are required to put news in context or background
- monitor radio, television and foreign news wires.

Under The Day Desk are 22 reporters—covering Malacañang, Congress, key government agencies, military and police—and photographers.

The Day Desk also controls on the call basis 10 the National section, which has four bureaus and almost 300 correspondents across the country.

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavidez

Solons want ₱250-M PSC budget

PUENTEVELLA

By Mac Anthony Bayas

GIVE THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION P250 million a year.

For winning the overall championship of the 22nd Southeast Asian Games, the national athletes should get 10 times what the national budget allocates to the PSC, Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella suggested yesterday.

The former PSC commissioner and currently vice president of the Philippine Olympic Committee said the country needs at least P250 million next year to fund preparations for the 2006 Doha Asian Games and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Puentevella said the country should capitalize on the SEAG victories of Filipino athletes.

"Now can the [Philippines expect to achieve to perform well in future international competitions such as the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, the 2007 SEA Games in Thailand or the 2008 Beijing Olympics where the measly sum allocated by the national government is barely enough for the maintenance and operation of the Philippine Sports Commission," Puentevella said.

Puentevella urged his colleagues to join him in lanning for an increased budget for the PSC.

"This move will show our athletes that we are not only with them when we celebrate their victories in behalf of the nation but also that we are fully supportive of them when they prepare and train for future competitions in order to bring more honors and prestige to our country," he said.

The congressman said 77 of his colleagues have already signed a resolution seeking to increase the budget of the PSC and boost the grassroots national athletes.

The 2006 General Appropriations Act has allotted only P26 million for the PSC for its operations and maintenance of the PSC-owned sports facilities likethe Rizal Memorial Sports Complex and the Philsports in Pasig.

The PSC also gets a monthly share from the earnings of the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corp., which amounts to an average of P50 million, to fund the training of the national athletes through the National Sports Development Fund.

But Puentevella pointed out that the amount is not enough to support the monthly stipend and meal allowances of the more than 1,000 athletes on the PSC payroll and their foreign organizers.

He stressed that it is the duty of the national government to provide adequate budget to support sports development programs.

The Arroyo-led Pampa administration, he pointed out, allotted more than P200 million for the PSC, but the budget was slashed to "unrealistic levels" during the term of former President Joseph Estrada and the present administration.

Tailenders resume PBA campaign today

JAN MICHAEL SEER continues to drive to get out of the cellar when the Barangay take on the resurgent Coca-Cola Tigers today in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Focus Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Fresh off their win over the Red Bull Barako, the Bolts go for a third straight victory at 7:35 p.m.

"We'll try to win our remaining [five] games and hopefully get a higher seeding going into the next round," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico, just before the pre-league took a Friday respite for the country's hosting of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

The Beermen are in the cellar with a 3-8 slate.

The Bolters (5-6) could leave the Beermen further behind if they prevail against the Barako in the other game. With Jerrian Chavez back, the Bolters still dropped a second straight outing against Alaska the other night, the first time the Aces played without an import in encounters.

Ovaria, one of the architects of Sta. Lucia's only championship accomplished during the 2001 Governor's Cup, lost a tough task to his matchup with Red Bull's Quentuan Hoes. ... Jonas Navarro

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Jenny makes Asian squad

SINGAPORE—A young but talented Asian team that includes Filipino Jennifer Rosales will have a star-studded international lineup in the inaugural Lotus Cup starting Friday in Singapore.

The first-of-its-kind women's match-play event, billed as the regional equivalent of the Ryder Cup, gets under way at the Tanah Merah Country Club with 12 players on each side and $750,000 prize money at stake.

Four members of the Asian team are ranked among the top 10 on the LPGA rookie money list this season, with 2005 British Open winner Jeong Jang the Inspi top scorer.

Anchoring the team is shotmaster South Korean Pak Grace Park, who, despite her struggle against injuries including a recurring back problem, will be looking to inspire her colleagues to victory. ... AFP

The WORLD

Edna Lemecha B. Gozo

Air marshals kill passenger in Miami after bomb threat

MIAMI—US AIR MARSHALS ON WEDNESDAY shot and killed an American Airlines passenger who claimed to be carrying a bomb in his backpack at Miami International Airport.

Federal officials said the 44-year-old American made threats and exclaimed he had a bomb in his bag as he was boarding a flight that landed several hours later in Golden West city of Medellín and was heading to Orlando, Florida.

The man, who arrived in Miami from Quito, Ecuador, was identified tentatively as Florida resident Rigoberto Alpizar.

Authorities said he was questioned by two air marshals on board the Orlando-bound plane and shot.

Many details of the shooting remain confused, but officials in Washington said the man acted in flight, ignored an order to put his bag on the ground and was shot on the passenger gangway.

Law enforcement officials in Miami gave a sketchier account.

They said the incident began on the plane but were not specific on precisely where the shooting occurred.

"The passenger then reached into his carry-on bag, at which point, consistent with air marshal training, the air marshals took the appropriate actions. Shots were fired as the team attempted to subdue the subject," said a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson.

The shooting triggered a scramble by air marshals to guard airports across the United States against possible attacks, but law officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they believed the incident was isolated and not terror-related.

Customs and Border Protection spokesman Jason Ahern said the agency was briefly evacuated and closed down while police officers, dogs and SWAT teams took up positions around American Airlines Flight 904, a Boeing 757, which arrived from Medellín, Colombia at 12:16 p.m. and was due to leave for Orlando at 2:18 p.m.

The rest of the plane's 153 passengers were ordered off the plane with their hands in the air and briefly sequestered. None screamed by Reuters had witnessed the incident.

Other flights in and out of Miami were not affected.

Passengers' luggage was taken off the plane and laid out in lines on the tarmac, where police dogs were led around sniffing for explosives, television images showed. At least one bag was blown up in a controlled explosion.

American Airlines' parent company, AMR Corp., said the incident involved an air marshal who had been on the flight from Colombia but federal officials declined to comment on what they called "operational details." Reuters

A COMPUTER-generated image released on Oct. 5, 2004, produced by scientists, shows an image of how the late singer and songwriter John Lennon would have looked if he were still alive. Lennon, a former member of the legendary band "The Beatles," was shot dead 25 years ago on Dec. 8, 1980. AFP/FILE

Patriot Act shown to be no 'magic bullet,' says expert

TAMPA, FLORIDA—THE US GOVernment's failure to convict a former professor accused of being a key figure in a Palestinian terrorist group suggests the Patriot Act is not the "magic bullet" some prosecutors thought it would be, an expert says.

In a 42-count blow to the government, Sami Al-Arian was acquitted Tuesday of nearly half the charges against him, and the jury deadlocked on the rest. More than 80 witnesses testified during the five-month trial.

"I think it's a setback for the government, and I think it might illustrate that the Patriot Act might not be the magic bullet prosecutors thought it was when it was passed," said John J. Fanning, a former New Jersey attorney general and federal prosecutor who served on the commission that investigated the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Al-Arian's indictment in 2003 was hailed by the government as a triumph of the Patriot Act, which allowed secret wiretaps and other intelligence collected over nine years to be used to charge Al-Arian and others with supporting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Before the loss, it was more difficult for prosecutors to access information gathered by intelligence agents.

The government said the law allowed it to tear down the FBI's Berlin Wall between criminal and intelligence investigations, but defense lawyers argued that the wall was a critical safeguard for civil liberties.

Former said the verdicts call into question the ability of prosecutors to use secretly gathered intelligence as evidence in a criminal case. He noted that intelligence investigations are not designed to provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the standard in a criminal court.

"I think what this really signifies is that the criminal law has significant weaknesses as a tool in fighting domestic terrorism," he said.

In this case, the intelligence was presented to jurors in the form of hundreds of transcripts of telephone calls and faxes in which Al-Arian and his co-defendants discussed the mission and future of the terrorist group, and appeared to celebrate suicide bombings that killed Israelis. AP

World marks 25th year of Lennon assassination

NEW YORK—NEW YORK PAYS the contemporary Thursday of the lonely jubilee of the murder of pop icon John Lennon 25 years ago—an act which became one of the defining moments of the 20th century.

A memorial service was to be held in Liverpool, Lennon's birthplace, before the focus of remembrations turned to New York where the ex-Beatle was gunned down, two months after his 40th birthday.

There was a rich of controversies however as New York authorities have declared that Lennon fans will not be able to stage an overnight vigil at the Strawberry Fields section of Central Park, outside the Manhattan apartment block where Lennon lived and was killed.

But hundreds, if not thousands, of fans are expected to go to the park to pay tribute to the writer of "Imagine" and countless Beatles hits of the 1960s.

The musician's deranged Mark Chapman was awaiting on the steps of the Dakota apartment block on the night of Dec. 8, 1980 as the musician returned from a recording studio.

Chapman had asked for his autograph earlier that evening, but returned and fire bullets fired at the rock world's preacher for peace.

"I'm shot," Lennon declared in his final gasp.

Lennon will be remembered at events around the world, ranging from a concert in the Cuban capital, to exhibitions in Paris and other cities on top of the commemorations in Liverpool and New York.

The Sirius Satellite Radio network in the United States was to host a four hour-long "Lennon Live" tribute—which will feature live performances from rock and pop stars Dave Matthews, Neil Phillip, Dr. John, Daryl Hall and Steven Mc's and Tesla.

The performances were to be staged at London's Abbey Road Studios and the Sirius studios in New York.

But fans who converge on Strawberry Fields will not be allowed to sing past the park's usual 1 a.m. curfew despite the pleas from vigil organizers.

Claudio Bonilla, who helps organize the annual gathering said New York should make an exception to the rule given Lennon's worldwide appeal, the Newsday newspaper reported.

"He was a great leader of our time," Bonilla said. "We feel the least the city should do is to allow the vigil to go uninterrupted, a lot it means more."

A quarter century after Lennon's death, a struggle remains among his family, friends and fans for control of his former wife's legacy.

Defining Lennon has become a cottage industry with exhibitions, memoirs, album reissues, documentaries and even a Broadway musical and cleaning film.

His widow, Yoko Ono, now 72, oversees the guardianship of the Lennon legacy and chief protector of his posthumous image. AFP

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China mine blast kills 74

TENGCHEON, CHINA—A GAS explosion at a Chinese coal pit has killed at least 74 miners, state media said on Thursday, touching up another statistic in a grimly predictable series in the world's deadliest mining industry.

And just hours after the state news agency broke the news of the deaths in northern Hebei province, it said seven miners had been trapped in a flood at a mine in Jilin province in the northeast. Four had since been rescued.

Thirty-two were still missing in freezing temperatures as the Li-aquarium colliery in Tangshan, 180 km east of Beijing in Hebei, after Wednesday's blast.

Xinhua news agency said initially that 66 miners had been working in the pit at the time but later revised the figure to 106. The State Administration of Work Safety put the number in the pit at 120.

Police struggled to hold back hundreds of relatives crowding around the mine's entrance hoping for information. But such high casualty levels from a single, routine efforts were going slowly.

"This is the first accident at a mine around here. I'd heard that it had a problem with the ventilation which trapped gases underground and caused the explosion," said Bo Shengli, owner of a nearby coffery and the town's mayor for 32 years.

Local people said most of the miners were from poorer inland parts of China.

Families of the dead would receive compensation 200,000 yuan ($24,778), state television said. Reuters

DVD, DVD! Pirates hawk bootleg movies in N. York

NEW YORK—DVD! DVD!NG cash lions, hustlers hugging large ball of bootlegged movies with the aisles of New York's subway trains, hoarsely calling out "new for this drifters!".

All those prices, the DVDs, often of current Hollywood blockbusters, sell well, despite laughable sound and picture quality. New customers seem to care that the copies were made illegally.

Bootleggers apparently have little in fear, unless Under state law, people caught videotaping inside a movie theater face a maximum fine of $250.

As part of its worldwide campaign against piracy, the film industry is pushing for tougher penalties for smuggling a camcorder into a cinema in New York, which has the country's worst bootlegging problem and some of the weakest penalties for those caught in the act.

A bill pushed by the Motion Picture Association of America would make operating recording equipment inside a theater a criminal misdemeanor, raising the maximum punishment to a $1,000 fine and a year in jail.

Making the crime a misdemeanor also would empower police to arrest violators on the spot, rather than the current practice of issuing them summonses.

Despite tought for a second time would be changed with a felony.

"We have to do something, because right now there's no risk," said William J. Shannon, a Brooklyn-based deputy director of the MPAA's U.S. antipiracy operation. "Right now, you're looking at something above the same as a parking ticket."

Legislators, film industry representatives and lawyers met Wednesday in Manhattan to discuss the new proposal, which would make New York one of several states to adopt tougher rules on movie piracy in recent years.

But the bill isn't without critics.

Defense attorney Marvin Schecter warned during Wednesday's discussion that, as currently written, the tougher penalties would apply to an obnoxious 16-year-old who holds up a camera phone during the opening minutes to snap a photograph of the screen.

Fort Lee School professor David N. Cannon likened the use of tough criminal penalties to attack the Internet-level offenders to pinning operations to "using a howitzer to solve a mole problem." AP

Emotional funeral for Iran crash victims

TEHRAN... TENS OF THOUSANDS OF mourners packed central Tehran on Thursday for a mass funeral of victims killed when a military plane ploughed into a densely populated area of Tehran.

The official news agency IRNA has put the latest death toll from the crash at 106, including 66 journalists and photographers who were traveling on the plane to the south of the country to report on army exercises.

Fifty-five of the 66 elected bodies that authorities have managed to identify were being buried in Thursday's ceremony, which saw the victims given full military honors and carried by speeches from journalists and officials.

Most ordinary people turned up to pay their respects as the coffins rolled by covered in flowers and the Iranian flag.

"We come under each every day and watch them[from Khobba on the television," Mohammad Mirjana, a civil servant, said of one of the dead state media reporters.

"We started the day with him, from our children woke up with the sound of his voice," said his wife, Zarrin Ghorbkhan.

The Lockheed C-130 transport warplane...brought from the United States before the Islamic revolution nearly three decades ago and started at open spots...crashed in a heavily populated area Tehran on Thursday. AFP

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Anti-Thaksin rally to proceed despite suits pullout, says critic

BANGKOK—A LEADING CRITIC OF THAI Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra insisted Thursday that a rally planned in a Bangkok park would continue despite the premier's withdrawal of lawsuits against him.

Media tycoon Sondhi Limthongkul told a press conference he would not back down over his criticism of Thaksin, despite comments on Sunday by reserved King Bhumibol Adulyadej that led Thaksin to drop six defamation suits.

Sondhi has called for half a million people to attend a rally Friday night in Lumpini park, where he will host his controversial talk show Muang Thai Rai Sapda, or Thailand Weekly.

The cartoon—until this year one of Thaksin's staunchest supporters—last held 13 rallies since his television talk show was canceled in September amid claims Thaksin's accusations of bias.

The withdrawal Tuesday of the criminal and civil suits—in which Thaksin sought some two billion baht ($48.6 million) in damages—"doesn't mean I am under no obligation to him," Sondhi told reporters.

"Although the prime minister has stepped back, it doesn't mean that I will step back too," he said, adding he had "no feeling" about Thaksin's move.

Thaksin said because he believed he was defamed and insulted on Sondhi's television talk show, in which Sondhi accused Thaksin of disloyalty to the king and abuse of power.

Sondhi, founder of the Manager media group, declined to comment when asked about the king's speech, in which the monarch called on all Thais to welcome constructive criticism.

The cartoon said the rallies would continue until Thaksin gives the public answers to a series of allegations made against him.

These include the alleged use of a military aircraft by Thaksin's sister to take friends to a party in Thaksin's home city of Chiang Mai, and his son's involvement in companies which had benefited from government contracts.

Sondhi also wants political reform and a review of the constitution.

A small bomb exploded Thursday in a telephone booth near the Lumpini park, causing no injuries, police said, adding the blast was far from where Sondhi's rallies are held.

Teachers' bashing, a government plan to transfer state administration of schools to local authorities, said at the press conference they would attend the Friday rally. AFP

GRUMPY WHITE HOUSE

A copy of the 2005 White House holiday card that is sent to about 1.4 million people across America. Some conservatives are upset at the lack of the word "Christmas" on the 2005 holiday card. AFP

Japan extends military mission to Iraq for a year

TOKYO—JAPAN'S CABINET ON THURSDAY approved the extension of the country's troop deployment in Iraq for one year, paving the way for the government to prolong Tokyo's largest military mission since World War II.

Japan deployed about 600 troops in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah on a humanitarian mission in early 2004 as part of the US-led coalition. The one-year renewal extends the deployment—due to expire next week—to Dec. 14, 2006.

The extension, however, does not require the troops to remain in Iraq for the full year, and local media have reported that Tokyo intends to pull out around the middle of next year as opposition to the mission lies in Japan.

Eager to raise Japan's international profile, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's government has been a strong supporter of the US-led invasion and has argued strenuously to keep the troops there to help reconstruct the country.

"We decided that we need to support the effort of the Iraqi people to establish a stable and democratic government," Koizumi told reporters after the extension was approved. "So we decided to extend our mission there."

Koizumi also said that he was undecided on the timing of Japan's eventual withdrawal of troops, but he urged Iraq to bolster security in the country so that stalled aid groups could take over the task of helping to rebuild the country.

The mission has never been popular in Japan, facing criticism that it violates the country's pacifist constitution. Many fear the deployment has made the troops and Japan itself a target for terrorists, or that the troops will get drawn into the fighting.

That opposition has grown as security deteriorates in Iraq. The Japanese camp in Samawah has suffered sporadic attacks, but no Japanese soldier has been hurt. Rock-throwing demonstrators near Samawah over the weekend demanded a Japanese withdrawal. AP

Blast in Pakistan region kills 12

WANA, WAZIRISTAN—AT LEAST 12 PEOPLE were killed and dozens wounded when a bomb exploded on Thursday in a market in Pakistan's troubled tribal region near the Afghan border, officials said.

The blast hit a hotel and shops in a market in Jandola town in the South Waziristan region.

"It was a bomb," Sajid Aslim, an official of the local administration, said.

Intelligence officials said the blast killed at least 12 people, but a resident said many more people could have died in the explosion that happened at 8 a.m., and came amid a spate of violence in the border region.

South Waziristan is part of Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal belt that stretches through rugged mountains and deserts along the border with Afghanistan.

Many al-Qaeda members fled to the region from Afghanistan after US-led forces ousted the Taliban in late 2001, and were given shelter by militant sympathizers from conservative Pashtun tribes that inhabit both sides of the border.

Also on Thursday, the beheaded bodies of two members of a paramilitary force were found near Wana, the main town in South Waziristan, said a member of the force, the South Waziristan Scouts.

The two were taken captive on Tuesday when they and two colleagues went into Wana town in civilian clothes. The whereabouts of the other two men were not known, said the member of the force, who declined to be identified.

In neighboring North Waziristan, violence erupted on Tuesday when Islamic militants clashed with a Uzbek gang and 15 people were killed.

The militants rampaged the bodies of five of the dead Uzbeks and displayed the head of one on a pole. Reuters

China eyes dam to halt toxic spill

JIAMUSI, China—China is considering building a dam to reduce the impact of a river-borne toxic spill that is due to arrive in a Russian city early next week, a government newspaper said Thursday.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong media reported the apparent suicide of an official in the upstream city of Jilin, where a chemical plant explosion on Nov. 13 caused the spill. Jilin Vice Mayor Wang Wei was found hanged, suggesting he took his own life, the Hong Kong newspaper Ta Kung Pao reported. It cited anonymous sources.

Government and police officials in Jilin at the city and provincial levels had no comment Thursday.

The Chinese government has vowed to punish anyone found responsible for the explosion or spill. The head of the country's industrial safety agency warned this week that anyone who tried to hide evidence would be punished.

The spill dumped 100 tons of benzene and other chemicals into the Songhua River in China's northeast, disrupting water supplies to millions of people in China and straining relations with Moscow.

The Songhua flows into the Heilong River, which merges with the Wusuli River in the Russian border city of Khabarovsk to become the Amur.

The temporary dam would be built on a waterway linking the Heilong with the Wusuli, which supplies water for homes and businesses in Khabarovsk, the official China Daily newspaper said. The two rivers merge in Khabarovsk, but part of the city lies upstream on the Wusuli, known in Russian as the Ussuri.

The plan adds to increasingly ambitious Chinese efforts to contain the human, economic and diplomatic damage from the chemical plant explosion.

That spot was chosen because the water is only 90 cm deep and moves slowly at this time of year, the newspaper said. It said Chinese experts arrived Tuesday in the northeastern city of Jiamusi to study a Russian proposal for the dam.

China has apologized to Russia and promised this week to work closely with Moscow to minimize the spill's impact. Beijing already has sent pollution monitoring equipment and 150 tons of activated carbon for use in water filtration in Khabarovsk, a city of 580,000 people.

Authorities were investigating the death of Wang Wei, who had told reporters that the chemical plant explosion in the city of Jilin would cause no pollution.

"The exact reasons are unclear. The investigation has not reached a conclusion," a spokesperson for the government of Jilin province, where Jilin is located, told Hong Kong Cable TV. *AP*

Erratum

The Ford Group Philippines fix(2) promo advertisement should not have appeared in the Finex Supplement "2005 World Congress of Financial Executives" published on Dec. 5, 2005. The promotion indicated in the ad was until Nov. 30, 2005 only.

We sincerely apologize for the error and for any inconveniences it may have caused.

Rights group assails McNuggets

CHICAGO—SCALDing chickens alive is the wrong way to prepare meat for a McNugget, animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals said Wednesday.

Peta and socially responsible investment firm Trillium Asset Management tossed a shareholder's resolution calling on the fast food giant McDonald's to require its suppliers to switch to a humane system of slaughtering chickens.

The animal rights group said the current method of slaughtering chickens in the United States involves hanging the birds upside-down by their legs and running their heads through an electrified bath that often doesn't shock them sufficiently to be knocked unconscious as their throats are slit and their bodies are dunked in tanks of scalding-hot water for feather removal.

"The way they are slaughtered would be federal (crime) cruelty to animals if they were dogs or cats and illegal if they were hogs or cows," Bruce Friedrich, the director of Peta's farm animal campaign, said.

"Chickens are the most abused animals on the face of the planet," he said, explaining that birds have no protection under humane slaughter regulations. "Every moment of their lives from birth to death is categorized by misery." *AFP*

INQUIRER

OPINION

A rededication

THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER WAS BORN IN A time of transition. Just as a whole new generation of Filipinos, born on the eve of the transition from dictatorship to democracy, have come into their own, so have we. We were conceived to counter the cronyism and corruption of the controlled press; we have been sustained by trust and togetherness in the room widely read and trusted newspaper in the country.

EDITORIAL We are justifiably proud of the partnership in ethics and relevance established between us and the public we serve.

In the two decades of our existence, we have fought to give our readers, in our watchword principles, "Relevant News and Fearless Views." The right of the citizens to information affecting their present and future, and the obligation to stand, regardless of the cost, for the integrity of our principles, has continued as

The partnership between the business and its readers has been matched by the partnership between all the different components of this paper. We continue to believe that a news organization, in order to be credible, responsible and responsive, requires not only progressive thinking in its editorial positions, but the same thing in the relationship and cooperation between labor and management.

The result has been a newspaper imbued with corporate responsibility to match the professionalism we uphold, and demand, of ourselves in delivering news, lifestyle and opinion. It extends to our dedication to consistently upgrade our means for delivering the news. A survey of our past issues shows a consistent effort to be reader-friendly, environmentally sound, technically cutting-edge. We have expanded to other media, in partnership with others, such as our presence on the Web through Inq7.net and the other print publications of the business group of companies.

For 20 years, we have been part of the lives of Filipinos, from the breakfast table, to the office, to work and in the home. Wherever Filipinos are in the global diaspora, we are there to let them know what is going on not only in the metropolis but the regions that comprise the nation.

We have celebrated times of triumph. We have covered periods of great and hopeful change. We have chronicled our national and personal disappointments. We have reported our collective tragedies and the reasons behind them. Essential to our task of delivering the news has been a conscious refusal to pander to the purely popular, to excuse the inexcusable, to rationalize the unjustifiable.

We have spoken for the whole, and the oppressed less. We have counseled sobriety when necessary, and rallied for indignation when justified. We have, on the whole, tried our best to remain true to the journalist's calling to be objective, while refusing to close our eyes to what is wrong.

We recognize that 20 years, in the life of peoples and nations, is a short time. Even as we take stock of what we have accomplished, we must look forward to strengthening the partnerships that rise on with bonds of mutual respect and affection. An anniversary, such as the one we're celebrating today, calls less for hollow celebration, and more for determined rededication.

And it is this that we pledge to our readers: to faithfully serve them, only according to our track record of independence and ethical journalism as well as to remain with them as a newspaper, an organization, that they can trust. We recognize the great responsibility our predecessors places on our collective shoulders. We rededicate ourselves to ensuring that even as the country and our society changes, we will be consistent in our advocacies, relentless in our investigations and inquiries, and permanently committed with love and where we deliver the news. Thus we pledge to constantly improve, and permanently seek to find every reason to be responsive to our audience.

We thank our readers, wherever they may be, for traversing the past 20 years with the Philippine Daily Inquirer, neither reader-their arms, placed in the house where they meet or end the day, on their computer monitors or even on their cellular phones. We thank them for the partnership they have never relinquished, however hard the times may be.

Only one way to close legitimacy issue

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE TESTIMONY OF ELCOMBELEC COMMISsioner Virgilio Garcillano before the committees of the House of Representatives won't bring closure to the legitimacy issue hounding President Macapagal-Arroyo. More lies will not make true other lies told before. They will only add to the confusion in the public mind.

For example, Garci distinctly remembers all the names of 37 senators, congressmen and other politicians who had called him at the Comelec during the elections, but he cannot remember whom he put his passport. (He was given by the House investigators a deadline, enough time to have one made at Inquirer.) He let down the names of his callers at the time they called (did he know the list will come in handy some day?) or did he tick off their names from memory?

Garci's refusal to answer questions relating to his conversations with the Glue in the Garci tapes saying that they are not admissible is evidence. In the same time, he said he would not anybody who used or listened to the tapes as he was a victim in those wiretaps. How can he answer anything if the tapes are inadmissible as evidence? If he admits he is a victim in the wiretaps, then he also admits he is one of those caught on the tapes and that the tapes are genuine.

Garci really has a selective memory. He readily answers questions that would absolve him and Ate Glue (especially Ate Glue) but refuses to answer those that would incline in criminal charges. Instead of answering questions, his testimony raises more questions, to mind of a dossier, it has blown the scandal wide open.

Obviously, Garci was ordered home to testify in a desperate move by Ate Glue to clear the legitimacy issue against her. She knows that she will never have peace until she leaves Malacañang one way or the other. She must convince the people that she is a legitimate president, that she did not cheat her way to Malacañang in her conversations with Garci. Worse, thrown on the same page where the vice presidential votes are tallied are the votes for the presidential candidates. It wouldn't take so much than a few seconds to also tally the presidential votes after adding the votes for vice presidents. That way, the votes for president and vice president would be counted almost exactly at the same time, without need for additional time and money. Everyone would know definitely, without a shadow of a doubt, if Ate Glue is really our president or a bogus one.

Maybe the PET is only waiting for a petition for it to declare null the presidential votes. If the recount shows that she really won, then she can have peace at last. Nobody will question her legitimacy anymore. She won't have to resort to lies and dirty tactics anymore. But if it shows that she did not win, then she should be woman enough to step down and hand the presidency to her rightful successor. She may lose the presidency (it's a thankless job, anyway) but she will win the hearts of the people and win a respected place in history because of her statesmanship.

* * *

Calling all doctors belonging to Medicine Class 1955 of the University of Sto. Tomas. The class will celebrate its Golden anniversary on Dec. 16 and 17 at the Makati Shangri-La and Witch Witch Gold Clubhouse, respectively.

For details, call Dr E. Amoroso, tel. No. (02)8-918-2395, and Dr. Andres Bustillo-Bumanglag, Tel. No. 09.16.347.1870.

* * *

TUBAYS JOKE: Having run out of places to go to, President Macapagal-Arroyo visited a mental hospital. The medical director introduced her to the patients thus: "Our President is here to visit you."

Everybody drowned out clapped enthusiastically, for one person. Only noticed him and asked the doctor, "Why is he not clapping?"

Replied the doctor: "He owns the hospital, no applause." (Because he has already received.)

Human rights heresies

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

AS THE WORLD CELEBRATES HUMAN Rights Day tomorrow, allow me to challenge the popular wisdom that "universality" trails good human rights advocates, and that human rights protective always gun hand-in-hand with the law. Allow me to convince my human right to spread heresy in a nation beholden to popular opinion.

The Filipino inspired his nation to gnaw away at the promise of a father land that reigns over all the world. The banished pilots flew to their deaths for the glory of the Empire of the Rising Sun. Every genocidal leper was the enemy race as humanity brings. Antagonistic nations as party of a superior nation. Those "barbaric nationalists" massacred innocent civilians in Interjuries and committed barbarous sexual acts against men and women, all in the name of ethnic cleansing.

Albert Einstein has said: "Nationalism is the measles of the world." It is actually a bad word elsewhere, except in the benighted Philippine Islands where the term is used as an easy substitute for selfishness, civic mindedness, public spiritedness, or just about anything that exhibit individual sacrifice for a communal cause. Maybe it's because these alternatives are all long words, and the practical Pinoy always goes for a more convenient "bansilo." I had elsewhere proposed the term "altruism," but someone said—not realizing the irony—that what we need is a term where the altruism is directed mainly to Filipinos! So, here to improve our vocabulary, but we be misunderstood when we speak of Filipino nationalism and human nationalism in the same breath.

Conversely, we have read that the late Sir. ten Aquino was released by President Marcos in early December 1980, and spent the last three happy years of his exiling life in Newton, Massachusetts, while serving as a fellow at Harvard's international affairs center this night, smiling pretext still longer at the Goodbye Limited. What we forgot is that Marcos was then under pressure from a power farmer from Georgia who had become US president and embraced human rights as the cornerstone of US foreign policy. Jimmy Carter was US president from 1977 to 1981, and would win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for his humanitarian work. I still would like many countries by the Malacañang controlled press each time Carter sent a human rights envoy from the State Department. Not surprisingly, history books say that Marcos brought out the champagne to the Palace when he learned that Ronald Reagan had won the US presidential election.

Indeed, the Human Rights Day celebration is not really the idea of human rights itself, but the idea that human rights is a global cause that can be enforced across national borders. If the idea of human dignity were all there was to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is wasn't pioneering at all. The 1776 US Declaration of Independence and the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen certainly beat them to it. What was really revolutionary about 1948 is that it allows outsiders to "meddle" in certain domestic matters.

Which brings us to the next problem. Inevitably, one problem arises from interfering in one another's life. How the Philippine government treats Filipinos is none of anybody else's business. Building a fence's draft, that's a matter for the sovereign. Only a xenophobe or bigot would object when you swing the truncheon, that's international. Mortality set anymore, and that is the true magic of the 1948 Declaration.

But the magic doesn't always work. Between 1975 until 1976, the Khmer Rouge killed 1.7 million of their countrymen out of a population of 8 million, executing all the members of the revolution, which included anyone who spoke a foreign language or wore glasses. It studiously ignored the horrors invaded Cambodia. And gone who the world took to task? Vietnam, because invading a neighbor is contrary to international law, and the UN custom and recognize the Khmer Rouge as the representatives of those who survived their killing fields.

Gen. 16 Amin Dada butchered his people, and was stopped only when Tanzania's Julius Nyerere invaded. Most recently, when Milosevic went on a genocidal rampage against Bosnia, it was only stopped only when the US and its NATO allies bombarded their fighter jets—without the blessings of the UN, which thus made it unlawful. They were saved before the World Court and the pilots were threatened with prosecution for war crimes. Unlawful, yes. But to spend American lives, (Tuesday's dinner at home, when the US sent jets to "help" Muslim during the December 1989 coup attempt, turning the tide against the murderers), I don't recall any of our "nationalists" crying "US imperialism!").

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights ... that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Governments .... Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; .... But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, ... evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security."

That's the US Declaration of Independence for you, and isn't it so elegantly substantive? Providentially, the paragraph closes with this sentence: "To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World."

My, oh my, there's talking to you, Garci!

Comments to pascalan@ateneo.edu

Public health service and a 'crazy dream'

ANALYSIS
Amando Doronila

WHEN THE PHILIPPINE MEDICAL SCHOOL was established by the Philippine Commission on Dec. 1, 1905, as the first department of the future University of the Philippines, the islands were being ravaged by diseases which had killed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos in the midst of wars of resistance against Spain and the United States between 1896 and 1900. Many more people died from diseases than from the wars. The scales need to catch the spread of diseases prompted the establishment of a public health service from the medical corps of a medical corps envisaged by Dean W. Worcester and the first commissioner to the islands, called an "Executive's crazy dream," realized like the establishment of a central government following a medical school and a hospital as an integrated complex. The concept was far ahead of its time.

The Philippines was in the midst of epidemic conditions described by Dr. Victor Heiser, the American director of health, as follows: "When we arrived, the hospitals were of most primitive type. There was not a good operating room in the islands and no laboratory facilities. Modern medicine had not penetrated the islands."

Although the University of the Visayas had a medical school attached to it, it was found to be "inadequate." At the time, there was one physician for every 21,000 persons, or one for every 4,000 square miles. Immediate training of doctors became a priority.

Five years after the establishment of the Philippine Medical School, the Philippine General Hospital was opened on Sept. 1, 1910. The hospital was envisioned to be more "a will for the sick and poor, but for the use of the Filipino people." This mission has become the defining theology of the PGH, and it has made it a unique institution among other state-funded or private-run hospitals in the country.

The PGH is not only a health-care institution. It is also the cradle of medical specialties in the country. In the words of a medical historian, "Generations of doctors and nurses, fifty members a public health nurse who died in the service of the volunteers during the Japanese occupation, became the first graduates of medical workers and an unbalanced distribution of health care workers in the country. Already in the 1970s, more than 50 percent of Filipino doctors were working on routine in the US and their income in many cases, the concentration of the remaining health care workers in urban areas left about 70 percent of Filipinos in the rural areas without adequate medical services...not much better than the appalling statistics of public health services in the islands in the early 1900s.

A century after the founding of the UP medical experiment, Philippine health care medicine have worsened the country's health care services have a crisis in the midst of the unbelievable wealth of Filipino physicians, as measured from natural parameters. The irony is that the rich countries have been awaiting off the educated human resources of a poor country to care for their aging population.

In a paper at the centenary symposium, Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, presented a graphic picture of this irony. There is nothing more desperate in time of human migrating to developed countries, he pointed out. "For the past several decades, we have seen the number one 'exporter' of nurses in the world, the Philippines, a fine phenomenon of doctors becoming nurses."

He points out that 3,000 doctors have become nurses and have left the country since the year 2000. The effects of this phenomenon are double-edged, he says. The benefits of the remittance payments of the nurses to their families in the Philippines are favorable to the government and the economy, but the trade-off brings high social costs.

"For a country with people-to-doctor ratios of thirteen nurses serving a doctor, for a country with hospitals in rural areas closing down due to unavailability of doctors and nurses," Galvez says in the paper, "in the long run, it will be the country's poor who will bear the brunt."

Finding our voices

AT LARGE
Rina Jimenez-David

HERE'S THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF THE responses of the members during the Business Mirror Forum held on Dec. 1. The first batch was handed out last Dec. 23 at the Shangri-La Hotel.

Of the three honorees (Jim Ibon Alaya, Chona Tamesa Cuyugan and Lily Monteverde), per-son at the awards rite, the most animated and, indeed, worry-proof was Mother Lily, who gave a brief but heartfelt response. This was what the most famous "mother" in the Philippine film industry had to say:

"You know, I'm really overjoyed. For one million, this is a dream that I dreamed...that I were receiving, I would like to be rewarded as an outstanding producer of pictures. But the way dreams come true, dalawa pa sa inyong labas!

"These are my [adopted] sons, pains in my life as a woman, as a producer.

"It made a lot of sacrifices in this world, you know, to make it to the top. I'm not saying I have the secret, but I will always continue to move so because I love movies and this is my passion. I will always continue my vision to help the movie industry. Salamat po!"

* * *

HONORED for her work in supporting new Gualberto Bautista, a novelist who gained renown for the adaptations of two of her works—Chona Tamesa Cuyugan's "Sa Dulo ng Walang Hanggan" which themselves became outstanding movies. Bautista, perhaps the most accessible and popular feminist writer in this country, thanked Ms. Cuyugan and Ms. Chanda, who gave shared book interior based on her novels, to head her income and insightful response.

"You know when I was just starting me and writing mostly love stories, I always had that feeling that I was not taken seriously among some-where. For example: Why does it always have to be the boy who makes the first move in romantic? Why is it that when a woman gets raped, that is the girl who has to undergo the humiliation before the husband's court and lamentyourname? As I always put myself in the shoes of my women characters, I always ended up with the question: 'What about me?' What happens to me, those? My editor, in so latterly a way as he could, tried to drill into me 10-year-old head that it was the natural order of things. Behind every successful man," he said, "is a woman.

"So I did not want to be 'just behind' but in step with my deserve status. I decided that for every wrenching scenes like myself, marriage should be just a response, after which she should go back her 'rage' and continue her career. My point friend Maria PL. Lanot once said that perhaps we should push for a bill that says an expiry date on a marriage contract, maybe renewable every five years? I agree.

"But we don't have to be with our on our family to see make conference to make additions in our lives. Our dreams and our love for family do not have to conflict with each other, nor does it have to be a choice between the two. Each human being is born with the potential to develop and to grow and to become whole. From the bathroom at home (here) interrupted the struggles that we brought into the streets and to the halls of Congress, and in streets, you to change the 'unnatural' order of things. Today we are here to honor women dropping in the dark, we have found our voices, we talk on the stage. We have changed.

"I have learned to write what I believe in, learned to speak my mind and my heart, and that taught me to speak my mind and my words to and for mother, my sisters and my daughters, my friends and managers alike, and the love part was when a woman crossed the sea in a supermarket, held me in her arms and whisper 'Kuya Boss, Pa'no Ba Umawa?': 'Iyan story to my story.'

"Thank you so much for this award. I believe in this award because I believe in you."

* * *

VILMA Santos, cited for achievements in acting, could not make it to the awards giving time due to other commitments that had to do with her "real life" role as mayor of Lipa City. She responded in email from Davao, Rina of the blessedbeat, who also sat on the Aktibong Commission of The "I Treasured," e-mail her response for her. The response of Vilma Santos, who is currently based in the United States, will be published in tomorrow's column. Meantime, here's what Vilma had to say:

"I wish I could personally receive the award, but I have to honor my additional duties as city councilor, which I can't miss my back on or delegate to any staff.

"Congratulations, I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to the organizers of the Business Chronicle Finalists for honoring me with this award.

"And I would like to share this award with those women who share in support to women—characters, stories and issues women. Our movie producers like Mo'My Monteverde who helped produced the movie, 'Sister Stella L.' Ms Charo Santos-Concio who chose me to portray the role of a mother in 'Dekada '70,' 'Basic Instinct 2: Risk Addiction' and 'Mali'; the supporters of those movies, the Lualhati Bautista director Laurice Guillen who directed the movie, 'Until Malabi El ta'; Marilou Diaz-Abaya, too, and other female directors and writers who made me a better actress.

"Through their works, they brought to public attention a wide array and range of problems confronting women, how they courageously dealing with them. Their scripts were the ones that challenged the conscience of our women, helping them gain stronger understanding of their role and situation and acquire, to borrow the phrase of a film critic, 'the ability to unravel their own and other women's situation.'

"Who else could love empower our women empower women themselves?

"May our women continue to grow in play a more active role in advocating for issues of women and in building a better quality of life for our young women!

"Maraming salamat po mula Australia ang aking kababaihan!"

'Now na'

PINOY KASI
Michael L. Tan

NOW? "NO," "YES"

Notice how the meanings change with each punctuation mark? That's enough language for you, in a wide range of linguistic practices that include gestures and even tone and body language.

Its also reminds us about the many social functions of human language—in this case, etiquette, the ways (through what) we express politeness, respect, deference.

Politeness particles

Let's look at the ways we use plural pronouns to express respect. In Filipino, we go, "Kumain po kayo?" when talking to older people. Its note that we say *kayo*, the plural "you," even when we're talking one-to-one person.

The Cebuano do something similar, both verbally and in actions. Some, using *nia*, again the plural "you," rather than *ni*, the singular form which addressing an older person or someone higher in status.

It's intriguing to speculate on why different cultures do this in different ways. Although—a person of authority and important power, almost like saying, "You're not just an ordinary person but equivalent to many people."

A few weeks back, I was listening to Olivia do so, a fellow anthropologist, as she described a conversation with her mother and a parent again as I imagine a new twist to the use of pronouns in Filipino. Spanish-speakers.

Let's see how you would handle the situation. If you are your nineteenth grandmother preparing to leave the house, how would you ask her where she's going? It would be rude to ask, "Saan *ka pupunta*?" without the *po* and with the *ka*, so singular "you." Instead, we go, "Saan *po* kaya *pupunta*?"

But Olivia says even that version would not be polite enough in Davao, where the proper way is to ask, "Saan *po* kaya *sini pupunta*?" (Where is she going?)

What you see here is the case of the third person singular to address someone. Again, one would not get very far if one had only learned the "basic" vocabulary and not developed social awareness during book-retrieval semesters so I suspect those linguistic rules enforced a time when you would not directly address some books.

Grandmothers were close to those powerful dates. (Even if you are not a grandmother, you can still get away with the use of your business, like "look, this is, well, "look" and there's linguistic etiquette avoidance this context. So, since once you want to carry these by asking if Lola's orthotic leg is aching and if you can manage it, we may need to go, "Kumain *po* kaya *ang* mga *sila*?" Dance *po* aching linguistic for?"

I talked about this in from Davao, Laguna, and isn't sure how widely practiced this "third person singular" etiquette is, even within Laguna, so we'd [and I mean Olivia and myself] would appreciate readers writing in about this.

* * *

Let's move to a much lower-keyed example of linguistic etiquette: *po*. Note that *po* isn't used to all Philippine languages, in fact, many our languages in the Western and Mindanao don't use this word at all, which is why people from the words will sometimes forget to use *po* when they speak Tagalog, and end up being perceived as rude.

But, also, reflects cultural differences in use Philippines. In many Visayan languages, people will use politeness, which is often translated as "please" but which actually means much more. "remove me," "If you have mine" and even "thanks in advance."

I thought of *po* while listening to Conrad Escaguinos. What I discovered by enjoyed was watching this honorable commissioner bringing out the young Turks of Congress. He is, after all, a powerful indicator of power—and for now, at least, Gloria throws he has no kowtow to Congress. Although quite often the same old has-been wrapped in new meaningless.

This is, precisely, what linguistic anthropologists do: we study the ways we use language in order to understand the nature, on the body movements. Unfortunately because of work, I could only catch bits of on the radio, while driving. I would have loved to watch him together with psychologists, some of whom were on all the episodes to lying to me.

Carol's job is to schedule and supervise, usually herself of the guests who actually come to the studio. Carol's reminds us that *po* and other linguistic devices ("sorry" "excuse me") are to overused, until they become practically meaningless. So the Chilmar go, "o ki ko *ni*." Before politeness is done, but without the mimicry the context and audience.

Linguistic synapses

Brain scientists who explore language also enjoy looking at the way language evolves, again with awards and lively gestures and actions, adapting to new needs and situations.

What comes to mind is the way we now use *to* in ritual actors everything seems to be of great urgency, where we must do things right away. Or, perhaps, nobody does anymore, in a city where politeness is so important, and yet where pulling or even "please" between are laid back, we "in your knees"?

I love the way Filipino have to create another come up with a new phrase that is perfectly suited to the Filipino understanding. I'm referring to the bit of today's culture combining the English "now" and the Filipino "na" Ultimately, what linguists call code mixing, which itself has a function. Since "sige na," using our lingering accents, comes through as an obedient command yet when you have the code mixing, you can also express irritation.

It's a wonderfully versatile phrase, suitable for all occasions depending on the medium of the message. I think to myself the phrase when I get a text from a friend, a Panorama parent, asking if we could talk. I texted back, "When?" and got "Now na" in the reply. I laughed out loud, trying to imagine what was behind it. Is she very hesitant, has, in her opinion, plans in the way it said: "Urgent. You better call immediately. READ. please."

"Now na" is wonderful for parents, allowing you to order your children to do something, and pre-empting a series of pleading. You don't even have to say, "honey" or "baby."

Nida Blanca's use of "when supposedly an intermediate, "Hey if you do it now na, I'll reward you later" . . . and what a reward it can sometimes be, so much so that we might find a replacement for the nonsense bubble, which Jose Panganiban's 1936 Tagalog-English dictionary rather curiously defined as "a kind of bubble." Maybe it was a bubble of nonsense, sometimes. Yes, the bubble should not be replaced with a more polite "now na . . . now na . . ."

Carl Sotto's use "now na"? I think you can, but you have to practice and modulate your voice, or you might end up sounding eavesdropping or manic, sadistic.

It's tough to teach adults with "now na" for maybe with me, we'll find a way to do this. For starters, how about selfies with placards and shaming so call on the president, "Now Na!" There's the challenge, to make it sound urgent and determined, maybe even threatening, yet coming through as loving encouraging hopeful.

Now na!" Now sige!

Forbidden fruits and tormented virgins

LOOKING BACK
Ambeth R. Ocampo

LAST JUNE, I ATTENDED A TWO-DAY MEETING in the Metalife room of the Museo ng Pinas in Intramuros. It was a meeting of the Intramuros Administration and the Museo ng Pinas. I wasn't there but we were not allowed, or given time to roam around the rest of the museum. To get around this, I pretended to have bladder troubles and, while walking to and from the bathrooms, I would peek into the halls and explore and discover.

One painting I always visit in the Pinas is a portrait of Maria Asunción A. is a native and dying image to encounters at night because it depicts a young girl and seems not holding a wooden cross. But could this be a deadly weapon if needed in dire circumstances? Asunción painted her portrait shortly before she sailed for the Philippines and founded what we know today as Monumento de las Obras, the place where you can still get an insane good and many sweaters for a pesos.

The Metalife room came to mind yesterday the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, because many of the colonial religious images of the Virgin were based on an image created by Murillo: a beautiful girl looking blue and white dress, seemingly in flight, her standing on a crescent moon. In many stores, once removed but not objects used to meet the devotions or highly prized artifacts coveted by collectors, follow the Murillo model and use stolen someone would go beyond the call of duty to get one. Especially in Quiapo, Sto. Cristo and Baby Jane and other do the iconographic and the origins of Philippine saints.

Among the wooden images of the Virgin that abound, the most interesting are from Bicol and Cebu. The latter are especially distinctive because they come in a mix of colors—among them of yellow, blue and red—sometimes with gold leaf and the concoction known as the basi-tuwalling sinduan brown. There is so much meaning and symbolism in the shape and color of these pieces, but often the many of the image is long for granted.

The first wedding in these yesterday was on Adam, Eve, the serpent and the tree. While it was being said, I couldn't help but remember a remark that had the Goddess of Edsa Jesus in Claro, a movie reviewer known to many people because Adam and Eve would have eaten the snake rather than one for hidden fruit.

But let us concentrate on the story and focus it is depicted in art. Because for some strange reason, the depictions of the Fall of Man in art always include Eve forbidden fruit to be a female, red apple, although the original story leaves this account as Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they realized that were naked and covered themselves using leaves. So, the forbidden fruit was probably a fig. But then apples are more appealing as a symbol.

In many ancient paintings, we have the apple of life in that was given to one of those goddesses leading the two lovers to create trouble for the Trojan War. Those whom it gave to deep which she was the fairest of them all apple. Pigs just don't have the same appeal.

If we follow another theme version of the Genesis story, then the burden of blame was heaped on the Philippines and the forbidden fruit was a guava the unfortunate message. No one bore the brunt of this misfortune than the unmarried women who were supposedly poisonous before it was made safe and sweet by the grace of a virgin that one ever, that by Mary, the mother of God, or the local diocesan patroness Mutya Manding.

As a collector of Philippine religious images, I of-

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Goon-like behavior of No. 7's men

MON. 11, 2005. 1 MEG. NEVER forget the date. It was the birthdate of my son and because I love him so much, I did not to go on my climb. I decided instead to spend the whole day with him.

I am an orthopedic surgeon by choice and profession, and a pilgrim of Filipinos, although not by extraction.

The last job came from locals at Robinson's Forever around 3 p.m. that day. The traffic on Edsa was terrible when a bus on my right side skewed left my car. I had to maneuver so my left arm avoid a collision. But in so doing, I unconsciously cut off a white Mercedes Benz bearing a No. 7 license plate. That is how I found out that the Benz had for a back up an LSM (bearing the same plate number) full of plain clothes "goons" with detention. I saw one of the goons throw a mini-baton-it as big as my thumbing his nose with a thud. As I was with my previous cars, I kept my cool and prayed that nothing else would happen.

If by any chance the owners of Mercedes Benz No. 7 would read this, please call me if the action of your goon could be justified? If I had committed a "lapse in judgment" in my driving, was it proper for your bodyguards to throw things at us—endangering also your passengers?

What if they had nothing to cheer and decided instead to cut their Christmas?

I am not pro or anti ERAP. I am just pro-Filipino.

Believe it or not, there are still a few

of us doctors here in the Philippines who care about our country and our countrymen.

I am praying that you are a "big shot" government official or a senator, for that does not give you or your bodyguards the right to bully anyone.

I pray that God will enlighten you and your men, and forgive you.

—ELIC KIRALLE, M.D., FPOA,
elmorelaxed@yahoo.com

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All forms of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

More good news

Ing7.net's regular good news feature saw the majority of letters to the editor with good things to say about it. Special mention was also made of its cyber columnist Jose M. Montelibano's "Filipinos" last Dec. 2, "A New Good Bits and Bytes" about how we successfully mounted the recent IBM Globe dragon dance/parade which relying on a wealth of Filipino talent and goodwill.

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

LYNNE MARY ELAYDEE on your good news postings: I hope you will persist in this approach even if only one of the stories landed on the front-read list tomorrow... Hmm, pa!. More on to bigger good news! Support for our troops and global peace [which] a positive effect on the Philippines and Filipinos. Super good news with the same passion and enthusiasm as you would report a scoop or a scandal. Make good news reporting a requirement for your journalism and see what happens! How can this a lot to keep the Filipinos' hopes up. Give our economic woes a breather from the ground of being Filipino.—Raul Fernandez, Vicente (Vic e-mail)

* * *

Re Mr. Jose Montelibano: I just wanted you to know that the article you wrote was truly inspiring. It's a refreshing change from all the bad news one reads in the paper. It brought hope. Regards and peace on.—Ayi Ibanez, EEEI, Worldwide House, Central, Hong Kong

* * *

There's no doubt that the media, with the tremendous powers at their disposal, can make or break anyone—individuals, groups or institutions. It's this ensemble power of the press, per se good use, that could be the most effective weapon against tyranny and corruption in government. In these times trying times when we have the exactly all our trust in the people who run government and in members of the political opposition, which we suspect of reversing power to further their own selfish agenda, we have no one to turn to but the media.

It's not Abelia's fault if almost all the news we get from it is bad. Exposure to the public has a result effect, assuming that the person who has committed a wrong has a sense of shame and is afraid that his name and that of his relatives might be tainted. In England, there is a law which allows shaming in addition to would-be malfeasants. Alfredo Lim once painted the rim of persons in dark-rose walls to put them to shame.

Media practitioners are also human beings who may fall for the lure of money and other mundane things to toll or write lies or maybe depending on whom but a higher. There are an principled journalists who spoil all the rest in the basket.

But the press has an important role to play in any democratic government. It is the first check and balance to government like ours, where the legitimate opposition has been weakened by undesirable elements.—Ramon Mayuga — Essen, Germany

* * *

According to the opposition, the real culprit in the "rigging" of the ARA Ballots win 1998. Because of the alleged illegitimacy of his presidency, the whole world does not believe our achievements capable of winning the gold and the Philippines is a victim of "chicanery." The prime minister of Thailand comes completed shows it.

Sorry but I strongly believe that that was the work of our own Filipino opposition. It is capable of doing things like this to discredit ERAP. The opposition can create controversies just to humiliate her. It will never stop, even at the time when our country needs a break from all the political noise. Opposition leaders didn't care if the country's image during SEA Games was at stake, and they succeeded. Ing, now I see why the opposition had ignored the whole nation from humiliation at least this once.—Linda Lim, Linda.Lim@fpcable.com

Across the NATION

China envoy defends NorthRail plan

By Tonette Orejas
and Carmela Reyes
PDI Central Luzon Desk

A MEMBER of an urban poor group opposing the relocation of families to give way to the NorthRail uses a native tray or "tabo" of coins to illustrate the small gains of the displaced in exchange for the multibillion-peso projects.

BALAGTAS, BULACAN—Chinese Ambassador Li Jiejun dispelled findings of irregularities in contracts tied to China's $1-billion loan to the Philippine government's NorthRail project.

Li, in a press briefing held after his inspection of the project's relocation component here on Thursday, also described the loan, touted as the biggest infrastructure financing that the country had received from China in Asia.

"Projects funded by Chinese loans are contracted to Chinese companies," said Li through an interpreter. He said this was similar to the scheme of other countries that extended loan packages.

The University of the Philippines Law Center earlier pointed out "legal infirmities" in the contracts, citing the failure to comply with the requirement of public bidding, the lack of price disparity Board concurrence and the absence of a certification of appropriation and availability of funds.

Jose Cortes, president of the state-owned North Luzon Railways Corp. (NLRC), said the agency did not violate any Philippine law when it signed the contracts.

"These have been cleared by the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel. Because this was a loan between two governments, the lender was allowed to select the contractor," Cortes said.

He said the China National Machinery and Equipment Corp., the contractor, is government-owned.

According to Li, this was the first time that China had a "preferential loan" to the Philippines.

"This is not common for China," he said, noting this was an expression of "special friendship" between the two countries that opened diplomatic ties in 1975.

Cortes said President Macapagal-Arroyo received easy terms in the loan: a 2 percent interest rate, 20-year repayment period for the initial loan of $421 million, a 4% percent equity every year and extended five-year moratorium on interest... after a negotiation with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

"It's a very friendly arrangement," Cortes said.

Li said the government was eager to start the project soon. Project engineers are arriving on Dec. 11 to present the project designs to the NLRC.

NLRC reports said the first seven of the NorthRail's first phase include the use of 19 sets of diesel-multiple units trains with speed of 120 kilometers per hour. The double track rail system would run a total of 84.4 km.

Travel time between Caloocan and Malolos cities, stretching 32 km, would take 37 minutes. The stations would be located in Caloocan, Valenzuela, Marilao, Bocaue, Guiguinto and Malolos.

Efrain Aquino, NLRC vice president for engineering and the design would preserve three old Philippine National Railways stations in Polo, Valenzuela and in Meycauayan and Malolos because these were declared as historical sites by the National Historical Institute.

Aquino said other stations could be preserved when the project was allowed to.

Li said the NLRC had complied with the first condition of the project when it cleared the project site's first 14 km of expanse.

The NLRC and the National Roads Authority, he said, carried out with "unprecedented efficiency."

In a counterpart, the Philippine government shouldered the P6 billion relocation cost for more than 44,000 families in the Metro Manila, Bulacan and Pampanga areas of the railway.

As of Thursday more than 18,000 families in Caloocan City, Malolos and Valenzuela and in the Bulacan towns of Meycauayan, Marilao, Bocaue, Balagtas, Guiguinto and Malolos have been moved out of the old PNR tracks, said NRA general manager Federico Lana.

But some families from Balagtas complained that they had been disqualified to get land in relocation sites and the NRA favored a few who lived outside of the affected areas.

Roundup

Mayor among world's best

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Mayor Oscar Rodriguez of this capital city of Pampanga placed fourth in the world's 10 most outstanding mayors, a London-based research organization behind the international search event announced in a statement released here on Wednesday.

Rodriguez, 60, a first-term mayor, was the first Philippine mayor to get the recognition. In July he made it to the list of top 60 mayors short-listed from out of 500 mayors in the world.

Tarra vum Ferer, editor of the City Mayors, the organizer of the "World Mayor" search, said Rodriguez "played a key role in transforming San Fernando from a town to a recognized city." As Pampanga representative, Rodriguez worked for the legislation of the town into a city in 2001.

"You have said Rodriguez "won wide support" from across the Philippines. He also received votes from Filipinos in North America and Europe.

According to Vin Have, the four top mayors all received more than 5,000 votes. Voted top three mayors were Dora Siakwanzia of Athens, Greece; Raul McCallum of Montenegro, Canada; and Alvaro Arzu of Guatemala City, Guatemala.

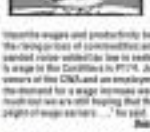
Zenaida Dagan, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Mayor survives boat sinking

ILIGAN, Isabela—A policeman drowned while Mayor Joseph Lluch of the inland town of Cabagan in Cagayan and six others survived Wednesday when their boat capsized off the Balintang Channel. Senior Supt. James Andrew Melad, Cagayan police director, identified the dead as PO3 Marcelo Ramos, 35. Melad said the 40-ton boat was bound for Claveria town when their motorized banca suffered engine trouble. Strong current battered the boat until it capsized at 11 a.m., reports said. Fishermen in the area rescued Lluch and his aides. Ricksil and Pedrosan, who was wearing a life jacket, jumped into the sea as the boat was sinking but among the last swept him. Fishermen later recovered his body.

Wilson Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Workers demand P125



BAGUIO CITY—Citing the worst economic crisis under the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, workers in the Cordillera have filed a petition seeking a P125 daily wage increase. Leonito Santiago, coordinator of Kilusang Mayo Uno-Cordillera, and members of the Cordillera Workers Alliance (CWA) filed the petition on Nov. 30 with the regional tripartite wages and productivity board (TWPB). The petitioners cited the rising cost of commodities and the implementation of the expanded value-added tax law in setting the increase. The minimum daily wage in the Cordillera is P174. Jose Maralakda, one of the petitioners of the CWA and an employee of Philippine Rabbit Bus Co., said the demand for a wage increase was long overdue. "We do not expect much but we are still hoping that the government will look into the plight of wage earners. . ." he said.

Dexter Cinco, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Monkey bite leads to death

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A five-year-old girl here died of infection on Sunday, 17 days after a monkey bit her. The victim's father, Lemuel Orate of Barangay Labangal, told reporters his daughter was attacked by a pet monkey of another family on Nov. 24. He said the animal bit his daughter in the St. Elizabeth Hospital here for treatment after she suffered fever. The following day, the victim underwent surgery but her condition did not improve. On Dec. 1, he said his daughter was transferred to an intensive care unit due to deteriorating condition but died five days later. Orate, a retired Marine captain, said he would raze the monkey's owner for negligence. "I won't let even a single centavo. I just want him jailed for his negligence," he said.

Apolinar Lamo, PDI Mindanao Bureau

SUGAR PLANTERS' APPEAL

Senate urged to rush passage of ethanol bill

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—A FEDERATION of around 11,000 sugar planters in Negros is urging the Senate to speed up the passage of the ethanol bill to encourage farmers to put up plants on the island.

Francis Tordesillas, president of the Negros Federation of Sugarcane Farmers Inc. (FESFIL), said his group had earlier endorsed House bill No. 4269, authored by Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, and would want the Senate to push approval of counterpart bills authored by Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Richard Gordon.

HB 4269, which was passed on Nov. 9, mandates the use of ethanol as motor vehicle fuel.

Tordesillas cited the FESFIL as one bevilla group of 11 associations of sugar planters in Iloilo and Capiz, passed on Nov. 8 a resolution expressing support for HB 4269 and endorsing the counterpart bills in the Senate. A copy of the resolution was sent to the Senate last week, he said.

The measures call for mandatory use of a minimum of 5 percent ethanol in all gasoline mixes for motor fuel within two years from enactment of the laws, and 10 percent by the end of the fourth year.

Sugarcane is one of the main sources of ethanol, considered a cheaper and more substitute to imported fuel and other traditional energy sources, such as diesel and coal.

"We are so much delayed [in the developing of an ethanol industry] compared to other countries like Brazil, Thailand and Australia," Tordesillas said.

He said sugar planters in Negros would welcome investors on the proposed ethanol plants in Iloilo and Capiz, which have most of the island's 22,000-29,000 hectares of sugarcane plantations.

Two sugar mills are based in Iloilo and another in Panay.

Sugar planters could easily supply raw ethanol plants, Tordesillas said, but he said investors remain tentative with their plans unless a law was passed to ensure their capital and supply requirements.

An ethanol plant costs around P1.5 billion, but existing sugar mills can be converted at with an investment of P500 million.

In its resolution, the FESFIL pointed out that biofuel, like ethanol, was fast emerging as an alternative source of energy.

"The development of the ethanol industry would also alleviate the plight of key industries suffering from recent price of imported crude oil," it said.

Tordesillas said the sugar industry was among those that suffered most from high fuel costs, which have increased the cost of fertilizers by 6% percent.

The plants could also absorb excess sugar supply that is dumped in the world market. Sugarcane production in Negros reached around 1.2 million metric tons last year with 261 percent sold to the world market, said Tordesillas.

He said developing the ethanol industry would help stabilize the price of sugar because of the 5% supply requirement of the plants.

This would benefit thousands of sugar cane farmers, especially those owning from 2.5 hectares of land, he said.

Granny Goose, Far Eastern score upsets

Paragua: I didn't abandon RP

PARAGUA

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RP, Malaysia start naval exercises vs terror

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE Philippine and Malaysian navies have started a joint exercise against foreign and local terror groups exploiting the seas shared by both countries.

Commodore Rufino Lopez Jr., commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao, said the conduct of the Malaysian-RP Exercise (Maree) is also aimed at enhancing the capability of both naval forces in confronting new threats.

The Philippines and Malaysia are often referred to as backdoor neighbors.

People from Mindanao, particularly those in the seven sea area, regularly travel to Malaysia via Zamboanga or Sabah.

The vast seas bordering the two countries have also provided avenues for pirates, smugglers and criminals to carry out their acts because these are not well-guarded.

"We recognize our limited capability and one way of managing our porous border is the closely exchange of intelligence information," Lopez told reporters here during Wednesday's opening of Maree.

Focus

Lopez said he and Royal Malaysian Navy 1st Admiral Mohammad Hashid Harun agreed that the exercise should focus on enhancing intelligence sharing aside from common physical activities such as search and rescue operations and specialized small arms response.

"The illegal activities mean a lot. The exercise will help us to address many problems including transnational crimes that happen in our border," Harun agreed.

Harun said the information and cooperation will become a deterrent "to whoever has plans in committing illegal activity."

He cited a recent cooperation between the Philippine governments and Malaysian particularly when reports broke out that Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani had fled to Malaysia.

Efforts

Harun said upon the request of the Philippine military, Malaysian authorities have created efforts to verify the reports.

The Abu Sayyaf, although a homegrown bandit group, has become more set of an international terror group, because it also raided Malaysian territories at the height of its kidnapping spree.

Among those was the 2000 Sipadan hostage-taking, where several foreigners had been abducted.

"Any terror activity has become a national interest of Malaysia," Harun said. Jaha Alfanda, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Quezon town mayor vows to put up fight vs order removing him

GENERAL NAKAR, QUEZON—He there days, deposed General Nakar Mayor Bernardo Arellanes Jr. has remained holed out inside the municipal mayor's office here, continuing to defy a court order ordering him to give authority to governor-in-the-local chief executive.

"I would for easy for me to give up my post. But what I'm fighting for is the fact that the judiciary has made a mockery of the will of my people. This is a matter of principle because the court ruled so," Arellanes said in a mobile phone interview on Wednesday.

On Tuesday morning, amid the tension aroused by Arellanes's refusal to vacate his post, Roman town vice mayor Angelito Francisco Jr. with 47 other leaders of the Barbero Andrid, a local women's public, inside the Sangguniang Bayan building in another part of the municipal hall compound at the conclusion of the session.

Two sheriffs from the Lucena City Regional Trial Court accompanied Bayot in the implementation of the writ of execution nullifying Arellanes's victory in the last elections.

Atlanta Judge Virgilio Alquiza, in his decision dated June 14, declared Arellanes's election in May 2004 "null and void" and also declared Bayot as the duly elected mayor.

However, only 14 out of 64 contested ballot boxes actually passed the scrutiny of the revision committee assigned by the court.

The rest of the canvassed ballots turned out to have been voided in floodwater for more than a month, making further revision impossible.

Arellanes lambasted the court decision as a "mockery of justice" and called the installation of Bayot a "farce."

To ease the rising tension, Supt. Pablito Danao, chief of the 41th Quezon Provincial Police Mobile Group based in Real town, asked Arellanes to surrender the armalite rifle, which he had inside the office.

Arellanes's could not do anything but surrender the firearm.

The mayor earned the moniker "Mayor Copas," for his uncommon mood way of treating suspected criminals in his town.

His 6th war also made into a booklet with his gunpoint cop in the title.

"I advised him to just follow the law," Baron said, adding that he allowed Arellanes to continue to stay inside his office for "humanitarian consideration."

"He will soon realize that he's now alone, that he's no longer the town mayor. He'll just wait for that," the police official said.

He said the police force would continue to stay inside the compound to maintain peace and order.

Board temporarily holds office in the Sangguniang Bayan building.

On Wednesday, Bayot called all local officials for his first official meeting.

"It's normal business for the local government," he said.

"I hope former Mayor Bernardo will just obey the law. I'm not the one forcing him out, it's the law that has ordered him to vacate his post," Bayot said.

Arellanes's said he would continue to stay inside his office to show his defiance of the court decision.

"They can force me out for over my dead body," he warned.

The order leading to his office has been published from the inside. Erdjhe Mollart Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ILOILO LANTERNS

Workers of the Iloilo City engineers' office start sprucing up the city's lamp posts with lanterns to usher in the start of the holiday season.

Execs seek funds for new site for wastes

LAGAG CITY—OFFICIALS HERE are scrambling for funds to relocate the city's sanitary landfill following an order from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to stop dumping garbage in the site in violation of the ecological solid waste law.

Victor Andres, DENR regional executive director, ordered the "cessation of dumping activities" on Nov. 25, citing that the "current practice of open dumping and absence of a leachate collection and treatment system do not conform with the technical guidelines for its operations."

A tentative opinion is a point the attorney intended to collect liquid from the solid waste. The purpose is supposed to separate so that the liquid trapped inside would not contaminate ground water sources.

Mayor Michael Garlan received copies of the order on Dec. 30. Based on DENR's evaluation, the city's practice of waste disposal is deemed to be an open dumping in violation of the law. The 2.22 hectare landfill area started operating in 1998.

Confusion

The order caused confusion among city officials who interpreted it as effective immediately upon receipt.

Joseph Tamayo, city community affairs officer, said garbage collectors stopped making their rounds along dirty routes to urban areas since Dec. 1 because of the order.

The DENR provincial office, however, allowed the city government to continue using the facility provided it adopted measures to improve the area and control the dumping of wastes.

"The order did not provide that the city should completely stop from using the facility. But officials must do something to control it from an open dump to a controlled one," said Andres, adding, local person of the Commission Environment and Natural Resources' ecological solid waste division.

Pantoja said the city government is given control over the property and has to upgrade the landfill from its present condition to how being slapped with a P50,000 for each day of violation.

Grace period

"Residents must comply with waste segregation from source to reduce the garbage volume thrown at the dumpsite," she said.

Despite the grace period that the DENR extended, Tamayo said there was still the need to relocate the city's landfill to a controlled dump in compliance with the law.

According to Tamayo, P1 million was approved to buy equipment, chemicals, facilities and other operational needs for the city's waste disposal system out of the P7 million that the office the mayor sought.

Of the approved budget, P1 million was supposed to be appropriated for the landfill's operations. The rest, Tamayo said, disappeared in the budget.

"The landfill is virtually operating without funds. The mayor is using funds from other departments just so we can buy gasoline and other maintenance for the garbage compactor," Tamayo said.

He advised residents to create their own backyard compost pits and observe waste segregation while the city government watchdog intensifies inspection the landfill. Cristina Arnados, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Drug menace spreads to 30 villages of San Pablo, police say

SAN PABLO CITY—ILLEGAL drugs, like shabu or methamphetamine hydrochloride, are widespread in at least 30 barangays of this city, according to the city police chief.

In a report presented to the city council of San Pablo about the current status of the anti-drug campaign of the government, Senior Supt. Elmo Sesinai, San Pablo City police chief, said that the drug menace has now affected 30 barangays.

Sesinai said the barangays affected by the spread of the illegal drugs included Barangays 1-B, Bagumbayan, II-A, II-C, III, VI-D, VI-E, Bel Bernardo, San Nicholas, San Crisostal, San Diego, San Francisco, San Gabriel, San Gregorio, San Jose, San Juan, San Lucas I, San Lucas II, San Marcos, San Rafael, Santa Isabel, San Mateo, San Roque, San Vicente, San Buenaventura, Sta. Maria, San Roque, San Angel, Sta. Felicitas, Sto. Cristo and Sta. Cruz (Poblete).

Sesinai said that since January 2005, the city PNP's anti-drug operations resulted in the arrest of 94 persons involved in drugs, 31 of them were drug pushers and 62 were drug users. At least 52 of those drug suspects are now facing cases in various courts.

Among the latest drug suspects arrested by the police included the three sons of late Governor Hilarion Ramiro (LDP-IC) Plot Conspiracies. They are Sandoval, 22; twin brothers Joel, 21 and Jaspon, 21.

Police had said that the three were arrested allegedly in a buy-bust operation for "peddling illegal drugs shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) in their area for years."

Sesinai also reported that in the year 2003-2004, the city police had conducted 139 anti-drug operations, which resulted in the apprehension of 281 suspects involved in drugs, 68 the samples, 52 were drug pushers, 203 were drug users and a total of 180 grams of shabu were confiscated.

The police chief appealed to the barangay officials to regularly have a dialogue with the police to speed up the process of solving the illegal drug problem in their areas.

Sesinai also requested the city council of San Pablo to provide funds to the police station for the acquisition of facilities needed to determine whether arrested suspects are actual users of the prohibited chemicals or not.

The city police head finally requested the council to pass an ordinance that would provide legal consent to some members of the PNP who are facing charges in court as a result of their operations against individuals involved in illegal drugs. Bernardo Bonate, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Mayor turns to bishop to solve row on flower fest

BAGUIO CITY—MAYOR HOSILIO Yaranon asked Baguio Bishop Carlito Cenzon on Tuesday to resolve a legal conflict between two organizations claiming ownership over the Panagbenga or Baguio Flower Festival.

An Administrative Order 235, Yaranon appointed Cenzon as chair of an interim organization that would plan the 11th Panagbenga festival next year.

The mayor said he requested Cenzon's designation to silence for either because the bishop could include in his team representatives from a city-backed festival organizer and the festival's founder.

Yaranon asked the Securities and Exchange Commission on Wednesday to suspend the Baguio Flower Festival Foundation Inc. (BFFFI), which is led by lawyer Damiano Bergante Jr., former president of the defunct Iloilo Dinagyang Festival Development Corp. (IFDC), Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan and former Mayor Bernardo Vergara.

Yaranon told BIC Chair Wilfredo and SEC Baguio Extension Office Director Rosario Ocampo that the BFFFI failed to account for P4.4 million which the city government released as aid in the foundation.

He said BFFFI credited the amount as donations, when it should be liquidated because it represented financial assistance using government funds that were disbursed by government officials."

Bergante, members of the Baguio Tourism Council and officials of the Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevco) conceived the festival in 1995 as part of a campaign to draw back tourists to the summer capital.

Baguio tourism suffered years after the July 16, 1990 earthquake devastated the city.

The BFFFI was formed to handle the activities.

But Tourism said Ordinance 44 in 1997 already limited activities of Panagbenga as a city festival, giving the city government the sole right over the activity.

He authorized the Baguio Flower Festival Association Inc. (BFFAI), a new organization run by Baguio businessmen, to manage the 2006 festival.

Yaranon backed BFFAI when he ordered it to prepare next year's festival. But Domogan launched the BFFFI version of the flower festival on Dec. 4.

Yaranon said back channel talks between him and Domogan failed to close up a compromise festival plan. The mayor said he only wanted the festival to run "without politicians." Mimard Cadevera, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

THE BAGUIO Flower Festival last February

THE DOLLAR ALSO RISES, and counting on remittances from OFWs, economists the country for the holidays.

Peso rallies to 2-year high: 53.67 to US dollar

From page B1

53.67, its strongest finish since July 17, 2003. Volume at the spot foreign exchange market remained high at $519.5 million.

Some traders said the peso would have appreciated even faster if the BSP was not stepping up dollars to take advantage of strong inflows.

"We've felt the BSP in the market although it has been buying dollars only in small amounts, as it's not the peso it's lifting (on) but as I must smoothen the (fluctuation)," a currency trader said.

Interest rates

Aside from the seasonal surge in OFW remittances, the peso was lifted by expectations that the BSP might further hike its overnight rates very soon, especially since the central bank of Korea recently raised its own rate by a quarter percentage point.

"The expectation of further tightening soon helped spur the appreciation of the peso," said Jonathan Ravelas, Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief market strategist.

Since a key barrier at 53.83 has been breached, Ravelas said the market's next likely target would be 53.30/35.

Ravelas said expectations of a rise in local short-term interest rates were likewise fueled by indications that the Bureau of Treasury was keen on more longer-term domestic borrowings for 2006.

More room to rise

Marcelo Ayes, Equitable PCI Bank chief currencies trader, said there was more room for the peso to appreciate, as OFW remittances were historically strongest in the third week of December.

"The market has discounted the Garcillano hearings," he said, referring to congressional investigations of wiretapped conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano in which the President allegedly ordered him to rig last year's presidential election. *(See stories on this page.)*

If the next batches of 53.50 would be broken, Ayes said the peso could retest the 52.20-51.60/81 range last seen on May 6, 2003.

Aside from remittances and funds flowing into stocks, Ayes said some banks were unloading profits from their holdings of Philippine dollar bonds.

He says there was a limit to the amount of dollars the banks could hoard, many had to sell excess dollar earnings as the spot market, he said.

More remittances expected

The peso is likely to remain firm in the days ahead and remains to receive more remittances prior to the third week, some dealing to currency traders.

"We'll have a good run over for next year because of pending fiscal reforms that shall result in a lower-than-expected government deficit condition," Ayes said.

He said fresh investments in the country's fast-growing business process outsourcing sector also likely help supply more dollars to the foreign exchange market.

Tetangco, for his part, would not say whether the BSP would further hike interest rates over the next term. The setting of the next interest rate by the policy-making Monetary Board is scheduled for Thursday next week.

"There has been a deceleration in domestic liquidity growth. There's a recovery in the peso and oil prices are still lower than the highs we've seen before," Tetangco said.

Inflation

"But (what) we need to look at is the inflation outlook for 2007 because of the lag in monetary policy," he said.

As a rule of thumb, the central bank raises its short-term interest rates to arrest inflationary pressures by siphoning off the excess money supply that triggers consumer spending.

But a monetary action to a given rise in rates to affect inflation only after 12 to 24 months.

The BSP has so far jacked up its overnight interest rates by 75 basis points this year, bringing them to their highest level since 2004.

Citing the need to curb inflationary pressures arising from sky-rocketing oil prices and rapid growth of liquidity in the financial system, the BSP has raised its overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase rate to 7.5 percent and the overnight lending or repurchase rate to 9.75 percent.

It also increased the reserve requirements on banks by two percentage points in July.

'Isafp 14-man team behind Garci tapes'

From page A1

worked on it," she said, recalling what Doble had told her about the wiretapping of the President and former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

She said she also stated in the lady-composed for a month after Doble was cashiered. The followed investigator by schools-trainee Garcillano's Ong on June 10 that he had this "mother of all tapes." Ong said he got this from Doble.

Santos, who said she used to be DOJ's "No. 3" to spies of Angelo as the successfully-televised hearing, overheard excerpts by Ong, a former deputy director of the National Bureau of Investigation, that Doble had given him the wiretaps.

The witness in June of the proceedings, subsidy the opposition chairman's two residences of electoral fraud, sparked the recent crisis in President Arroyo's 4-year-old administration and an impeach move attempt which her allies in the House of Representatives quashed in September.

On questioning by the committee, its chair, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, and other senators, she said Doble had told her that he got a report on bad conduct this wiretapping and that Garcillano was also subject of surveillance.

Arroyo's special report last September said that Garcillano was the object of the wiretaps and that it was ordered by Michaelang because it was intended about the intelligence community.

Santos said Doble told her he told the tapes to Ong for PI million in May in a meeting at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Quezon City. She said then-Gen. Santiago, an ISAFP operative and Ong's neighbor, had told her of the tapes' then Doble at Santos.

Doble, who is under AFP custody, along with his legal with and two children, has denied giving the tapes to Ong. (See story on Page A12.)

Santos, who was named in a Doble jacket, said that while she and Doble were no longer lovers, they still maintained contact by mobile phone.

"In fact, he wants to come out, but he doesn't know what to do. He's afraid for his family," she said. "If he has a chance, he wants to meet with Ong and Lito Justiniano and say sorry because he was party to the filing of illegal documents charges against them."

Former deregated AFP Infoop ping charges against Ong that stemmed from a brief stay at the late Cardin Seminary in Makati. She said she, Doble and Ong had sought refuge in the seminary after Ong made his dramatic announcement in June and remained in summer there denounce moves to impeach Mr. Arroyo's resignation.

Santos said she saw Ong on TV the Wednesday and she took pity on him, that's why she decided to come out.

Victim of dirty game

"I pity him. He's a victim of a dirty game. I don't want to help him. He has nothing to do with this. They're all cursing," she said of Ong, who faced the press at an undisclosed place on Wednesday to request that criminal charges be filed against him so he can appear before the panel.

Lanao vote-buying

The committee also heard testimony from Ashtoni E. Lantan, president of the Lanao Oiely Milkmarket for GMA (LOM), that Mr Arroyo brought P2 million to Cagayan de Oro to ring the silence of her supporters who had carried out a "special operation" in Lanao del Sur to ensure her victory.

Lantan, of Iligan town, Lanao del Sur, said Lanao del Sur Vice Governor Mamintal Mamapay Bantugan, all renowned with LOM, had given responses to reporters in Pettie Trane, a colleague, that they were motivated by Mr. Arroyo's order to give money to Mindanao to ensure Mr Arroyo's victory. But Mamer later denied the allegations.

Special operations

Lantan said that Mr. Arroyo and Gen. who was then with the PNP, had sent the P1 million for "special operations," that entailed getting off counterfeit election officials—at P50,000 to P60 per vote bought. He pointed to election Pro'clonal in the election areas in May 2004.

Senate President Franklin Drilon decided to grant Lantan's request to be placed under the witness protection program for legislative values, when he would be immune from criminal prosecution.

At the hearing, Mister tried to discuss an affidavit he had submitted to the committee, saying that he was violated by his lawyers Raul Pedida, into reversing it.

"I would not mean to the faithful Circuit Court of Tabu Bumbanan, Lanao del Sur, in February 2006, flatly denied the allegation.

"I will never be a party to cheating," he told the hearing.

But Bantugan, Mamapay and Mimpuyo Bantugan, all renowned with LOM, had given responses to reporters in Pettie Trane, a colleague, that they were motivated by Mr. Arroyo's order to give money to Mindanao to ensure Mr Arroyo's victory. But Mister later denied the allegations.

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"I would not mean to the faithful

SEN. ADDOLFO BIAZON, chair of the committee on national defense and security, pointing the wiretapping of the President of the republic.

"GARCILLATE" inquiry reopens at the Senate with Lanao chair Benjamin Abalos and Blas Ople-Agpalo's T. Monor among the witnesses.

WITNESS Antonio Lantan leads the Lanao Unity Movement for EDSA but his testimony is damaging to Miss Arroyo.

Where's Sgt. Doble?

From page A1

Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga to withhold arrest order

But Doble, an operative of the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP), may be facing charges in connection with allegations that he got P2 million for saying that he'll wire-tap Mr. Arroyo's "mother of all tapes," an Iraqi official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Inquirer source also said Doble had promised to work while serving charges for "destabilization" in signing P2 million in exchange for saying that the "Doble tape" tapes Iraqi wiretaps.

Senga made the statement when asked by reporters about the whereabouts of Maj. Ferdinand Doble, Doble's friend, Marietta Santos, before a Senate hearing that Doble wiretapped the President on orders of his superiors.

"I think there are not persons here. The issues of your questions are not present facts. Those are not established facts," Senga said.

But he admitted there was surveillance military investigation of Doble to check such allegations.

"The investigation of Sgt. Doble is being undertaken by the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection of the Philippine National Police). I have no idea what is going on with the CIDG," Senga said.

Senga said Santos' claim that she received the tapes from Doble should be resolved by the congressional committee looking into the controversy and that the military would no longer investigate it.

Denials

When pressed why he wasn't investigate Doble's involvement, Senga referred to the fact finding under constituted by Inspector General Gen. Edmund Matos-Mayuga, who assumed the post of Navy Flag Officer in Command yesterday.

But Mayuga is not investigating the alleged wiretapping, but the conduct of military personnel during the elections.

In previous interviews, Senga says evasive whenever he was asked the status of the investigation of Doble's role in the "Hello Garci" tapes.

On Nov. 23, he said Doble had an "administrative case" that he declined to give details.

An AFP spokesperson said the case was likely handled by Intelligence Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Samuel Bagcal. would also not give any details, except that "Doble was investigated for bail."

Doble, who belongs to the Military Intelligence Group 22 (MIG-22), is scheduled intelligence unit based in Metro Manila, remains under Lady custody, according to Senga.

The official, who did not wish to be named said Doble had been transferred from Military Intelligence Group (MIG) 21, the Intelligence unit based in Camp Aguinaldo.

According to the official, Doble also have possible court-martial for corruption, as recommended by an Inquirer investigation that was initiated in June.

This followed revelations by Samuel Ong, a former deputy director of the National Bureau of Investigation, that Doble was the source of the "massive tape" of the alleged wiretapped conversations between former Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and Mr Arroyo (See story on Page A12).

No authority to file charges

"We cannot prove yet the wiretapping but we have proof that he accepted P2 million from Jaime Ong," the official said in a telephone interview. He said that Doble was given another assignment to keep him occupied and for security reasons because of threats to his life.

The lady-official said the unit ordered all "internal investigations" of Doble's "action on arresting PMF" soon after the "Hello Garci" tapes were made public on June 8.

He said the investigation was conducted by the unit itself with no a directive from the AFP chief of staff, who was then Gen. Efren Abu. "He wanted for a directive but nothing came," he said.

He said the lady would not release the findings or implement the recommendations because "we have no authority to file charges against Doble."

"We can only follow the chain of command. Not even the House or Senate committees can tell us to arrest the findings of the investigation," he also said.

T'SGT RIDAL DOBLE recoils in earlier testimony to Ong Shu so-in, in partner Marietta Santos during her appearance at the Senate hearing on Thursday.

Garci goofed, says Pichay

From page A1

lordship said it was improper of the former election commissioner to refuse to submit to Malacañang's "Hello Garci" hearing that it was his voice caught on tape talking to Mr Arroyo.

"He should have submitted that it was his voice, then invoked his right to silence. You're not the public but (GMA, or the Anti-Wiretapping Law," the Surigao del Sur lawmaker told the Inquirer.

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Sub judice

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Despite objections from opposition lawmakers, he repeatedly invoked during the eight-hour hearing that the principle of sub judice has barred Congress from looking into the contents of the tapes pending the resolution of the case.

Garcillano said the five commissioners who voted to dismiss the election protest case on May 18 "have the right to remain silent."

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"There is no script. I think he's trying to avoid answering questions to implicate other people," he said, referring to his affidavit in which he detailed the role he played in the bribery of election officials to ensure Mr Arroyo's victory.

"I haven't executed. I was tricked. I was fooled. I was threatened into saying that... I was told by Attorney Pulido to just sign it so that he'll have something to prove that he lent me to Cayetano declare," he said.

But Pulido played a rapid-intervention defending that Mister had made the statement voluntarily.

No shows

Garcillano, Ong and Vidal failed to appear at the Senate hearing for various reasons. Garcillano begged off after undergoing a "procedure" 24 hours long hearing," at the room of Representatives on the same issues last Wednesday, said Biazon.

Ong is facing arrest for charges of illegal detention and kidnapping and inciting to sedition. Vidal is cursed by Executive Order 464, which bars administration, police and military officials from appearing before congressional hearings without the President's permission.

Santos, recalled that Doble briefly played the master tape for her and told her the voices were that of Mr Arroyo and Garcillano. But she said she never saw the group that did the alleged wiretapping.

Santos confirmed her earlier statement that it was Doble who gave the tape to Santiago who turned it over to Ong in February this year. The tape came from Lady's MG 25.

She also revealed that Santiago, Ong's deputy, delivered the P2 million to Doble at the Imperial Palace, but admitted that they never counted the money.

Of the amount, Doble gave her P70,000, his brother Reynaldo P300,000 and Santiago, P200,000, according to her.

"It was supposedly for Doble's birthday," she said when asked what the money was for.

Santiago delivered the money after Doble confirmed to Bishop Teodoro Bacani that he had turned over the tape to Ong "to expose" the alleged administration-instigated cheating. The confession was recorded on tape.

Santos said Doble "feared for his life" because the lady hacked his wife and two kids to Cotabato, Columbia, and took custody of them."

"I don't know if you could call that hostage," Atienza said. With reports from Nikko Dizon, Gayo C. Magcale, Pia Wilson and Ruena Rimbert

Garci goofed, says Pichay

From page A1

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Sin, Yorac, 7 others enshrined on heroes' wall

Front page A1

traveled to Iloilo's native Iloilo, to see avail.

"I remembered that they lived in front of the San Jose College, so I went there. But the terrain has changed. I feel so disappointed (that I couldn't find Dita relatives)," she said.

Former UP Journalism Department chair Carolina Malay will receive the citation on Pedro's behalf. It is only fitting because he acquired a degree in journalism from the then UP Institute of Mass Communication in 1975.

Pedro died in Sariaya, Quezon, on Nov. 13, 1879, four years after going under ground.

Lual Bacusay: 'At the time, the Philippines army was conducting an operation. The house he was in was shelled and he was wounded.

"When the military got to him, he was tortured in several stages. He didn't reveal **any name. The first stages of torture** reportedly broke a picture of Jack being pulled apart by a carabao (bull...)"

Pedro's friends buried him at the Loyola Memorial Park in Pandacan on Jan. 24, 1980. He was 30.

"Jack will be honored (today). I hope all his friends and others who know him will come," Joyce said, adding her wish that his family would be present as well.

Yorac and Sin

The well-known ones in this year's crop of heroes are Sin, Manila's outspoken archbishop and a leading light of the Edsa revolt in 1986, and Yorac, the tireless human rights lawyer and professor who became a model **public servant and chair of the Presidential** Commission on Good Government.

Both Sin and Yorac died this year—in June and September, respectively.

The Rock

Raquel Aldaño-Tigbas, activist and **no-political dreamer, was known** among feminists and women's rights groups. She died of cancer in 2003.

Nicknamed "Rock," Tigbas was a rock of strength for fellow activists during her UP days. Charged with sedition and rebellion during the martial law years along with her husband—Rigoberto Tigbas, now a member of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Cabinet—she spent two years in detention, even nursing her baby behind bars.

Upon her release and despite military surveillance, Tigbas continued to organize communities. She helped put up a day care center for children of political activists.

The last two decades of her life were devoted to women's concerns. She put her life on the line to defend abused women, lending her voice for the passage of the Anti-Rape Law of 1999.

Organizer

Armen was a second-year nursing student at Far Eastern University when she was drawn to political activism.

She was only 17 when she decided to do full-time organizing work among women workers, children and voters. She also organized underpaid women factory workers.

Armen's husband Oscar was into trade union organizing, and because of **this he was arrested and detained. After** his release, the couple moved to Bikolandia to do some organizing work.

In 1983, Armen was with a group of peasants in Albay when the Omarbol peasant army group "Isibad" attacked. Some of her companions were able to escape and one was killed.

Armen was captured alive. She was raped and beaten repeatedly until she died.

Fighter

The corpse of the town's activist was refused to allow Armen's burial in the public cemetery. But the bishop came to lead the rites outside the cemetery walls, among the people who loved Armen.

The names Tagumolila and Armen are familiar to townsfolks covering the communist insurgency. Two other communists are named after them, but the Barangay Mayapahan does not mention this.

Born to Iloilo in 1945, Tagumolila started off as an activist who later joined the military and reached lieut

While serving as a first lieutenant in the Army in the early 1970s, Tagumolila defected to the New People's Army. He did organizing work, mentoring people not to be conscripted into counterinsurgency operations.

Tagumolila was killed in a military NPA encounter in Bohol in 1972. He was 28.

His body, along with those of his comrades, was displayed in the town center. **The military learned** who he was only after grieving peasants identified him.

Tagumolila's death and his defection were the subject of news stories in the mainstream media at the time.

The military offered a military burial for him, but his family declined.

Golden boy

Aves was the proverbial golden boy in school. While attending Catholic schools, he excelled in academics and extracurricular activities.

After graduating salutatorian from the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Makati, Aves proceeded to UP to take up architecture.

The university scholar joined the militant Kabataang Makabayan while giving vent to his artistic tendencies by serving up the Friday fining, a cultural group with a political outlook.

Aves dropped out of college when martial law was declared in 1972. He went to Mindanao and immersed himself among the peasants. He and his wife took part in the struggle of the poor and organized them in mass mobilization.

In 1985 when the Aveses were in Cotabato, the military raided. The house that they and their comrades were occupying. They tried to escape in two cars but **the military gave chase.**

Engineering student

Aves and a companion who were in one car were gunned down, but their comrades in the other car were able to speed away.

Catholic, born and raised in old Manila, Aves an engineering student at Mapua Institute of Technology when he was drawn into student organizing.

He helped unify and strengthen the College Editors Guild when martial rule was imposed. He helped in the information campaign, bringing banning issues to out-of-school youth in depressed areas.

A month after martial law was declared, Cadiao went to Western Visayas to continue his campaign, this time among the peasants. He kept close to his family by writing letters, informing them of his activities.

He was killed in 1974, when his group encountered a paramilitary group.

CARDINAL Jaime Sin. Family-raised.

HAYDEE YORAC. One of a kind.

The 'salutaneged'

Aves as a child, Miguez was drawn to the "tortured men in the night."

Because his family lived close to the municipal jail, he knew the sound of pain. He would hear the tortured through the jail windows or slip a hot drink through to prisoners.

Miguez was also attracted to the drags and suspects. He was fond of reading.

Once, for his birthday he prepared something special for his friends. His father found out who they were—"bandit lechineros, laborers, boys in rags, characters in the plaza, the unwashed, the poor."

The father asked: Why?

Miguez' reply: "They have stories to tell, they represent the millions who are submerged. Someone has to speak for them, to champion their cause."

While serving as literary editor of the campus paper Adam Collegian, Miguez was summoned to Constabulary headquarters and questioned about his part in the student movement.

Good Friday

Not long after, he headed for the hills of Aklan and Antique.

On Good Friday of 1984, Miguez was wounded in a military ambush. The military wanted to keep him alive in order to get information from him.

But a high official riddled Miguez with bullets. He was only 22.

GMA approval . . .

Front page A1

Malacañang blamed politics for the President's poor marks and urged the public to focus on the economy.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said: "The economy is on a roll and political stability is firm, but undermined that public sentiments may still be affected by residual political turmoil but we are optimistic that the ratings have no other way to go but up."

Worse, too

Unlike in previous polls, SWS noted that thigens' dissatisfaction with Ms Arroyo's performance in the latest survey was spread all over the Philippines, including the Visayas which until recently was considered supportive the President.

"The decline occurred in the balances of Luzon (a comeback from Manila (negative 34 percent) and the Visayas (negative 18 percent), with essentially no change in Metro Manila (negative 45 percent) and Mindanao (negative 23 percent)," SWS said.

All social classes

Dissatisfaction with the President was voiced by all social classes regardless of sex. Men gave her a negative rating of 21 percent, down by 14 points from September, while women gave her a negative 23 percent, unchanged from September.

The President also got very poor marks from the E or very poor class (negative 34 percent) and D or "masa" (negative 30 percent), nearly double the negative 18 percent rating she got from the middle-to-upper ABC classes.

While SWS was conducting the survey, the President was taking credit for the upsurge in confidence in the economy as shown by the peso climb to the 44 mark against the US dollar and the stock market's bull run following the implementation of the expanded value-added tax.

The 16-percent expanded value-added tax was implemented on Nov. 1.

The President also took note of the decline in pump prices largely due to a softening of world crude oil prices) that she had blamed for her poor ratings in previous surveys.

Not a closed book

Her political spokesperson, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor, also declared the "Hello Garci" scandal is closed book has last month.

The scandal stemmed from wiretapped conversations in which the President allegedly ordered former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to rig the canvassing of the results of last year's presidential election in her favor. Ms Arroyo has denied any wrongdoing.

In September, Ms Arroyo's allies in the House of Representatives defeated an opposition move to impeach her.

After nearly five months in hiding, Garcillano surfaced while the canvass was being conducted.

With a report from AP

METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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'Bombs went so sow fear, not kill'

By Leigh A. del Puerto

THE BOMBS THAT EXPLODED IN three separate places in Metro Manila on Wednesday used black powder, leading the police to conclude that those were intended to "scare tourists and have nothing more than to scare or kill," a senior police official said yesterday.

Director Nilad Querol, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, also believes that only one group was behind the attacks.

The senior briefings could be in the handiwork of a group "aiming to destabilize the government," he said.

"Because clearly, that's the effect they want to achieve," Querol told the business.

The 111,000-strong Philippine National Police was immediately placed on full alert Wednesday night following the attacks, including the strafing of the Lourdes Seaside Mall in Quezon City, which was owned by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo in Makati.

Black powder is the same material used in making firecrackers. It is commercially available.

"They were low velocity explosives and not real bombs as bombs made from C4 (a powerful explosive). They were not really intended to kill or maim anyone," Querol said, adding that even the positioning of the bombs underneath the cars and near the trash was meant to spare the driver from harm.

He added: "They're clearly meant to catch attention so as to weaken the president [by] plunge [leading to] the stock market. Remember, they happened at a time when we were just rejoicing after winning the Sea Games and when our economy was on the road to recovery."

Querol belittled claims that disillusioned military men were behind the strafing of the UN building below three helicopters.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil said the same opinion as he said there is no evidence as of now pointing to any particular group.

Hours after the incident, a group calling itself the "Enlightened Warriors" claimed responsibility for the strafing of the UN building.

"The attack symbolizes the widespread frustration and anger among MV (Armed Forces of the Philippines) solidarity against the illegitimate and corrupt administration of Gloria Arroyo," the group's statement e-mailed to the business said.

An Armed Forces official denied the existence of the group and blamed the New People's Army for the attacks.

"Initially our findings with the police is that these are actually done by some operatives from the AFP, everyone," AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga told reporters.

The UN incident was followed by an explosion several hours later on a beachside hotel in San Dionisio, Parañaque City. And her one occurred on M.H. Del Pilar Street in Ermita, Manila. Caloocan City and then on Scout Tuazon Drive in Cubao, Quezon City.

The bombs damaged the van belonging to a son of Gen. Reynaldo "Rainier" Punzal in Quezon City, a sports utility vehicle owned by Senator Panfilo Lacson in Mandaluyong City and another SUV parked in front of the Ermin Printing City in Caloocan City. With Dona Pazzibugan and Tarra Quismundo

'I am happy where I am' – Binay

TO THE MOOD OF MAKATI CITY, Mayor Jejomar "Jojo" Binay is a saint. To President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, or GMA, he is a political whom in her side who prompted one newspaper headline years to say recently, "GMA hates your guts, Jojo." Widely attributed a few months ago for allowing opposition members to hold sensitive senior bullets in his city, being the financial heart of the country, to a wonder it, Binay admits he is not the President's greatest fan.

Despite allegations of graft hanging over him, Makati's mayor maintains he has nothing to answer and his supporters say the allegations are politically motivated.

"I'm a street fighter," Binay says. "My opponents forget. I am from the streets. I was born poor ... what I have achieved I have done on the people's work." Appointed by former President Corazon Aquino in 1986, he has taken a new landscape municipality and earned it into one of the country's wealthiest cities.

Makati City today boasts the head offices of some 400 of the country's leading corporations, the country's stock exchange, 473 banks, 1,031 licensed institutions, 149 insurance companies and 46 foreign embassies and consulates.

But to members of his city council, Binay is a tyrant who has ruled with an iron fist, allegedly using his power to silence critics and quash any opposition. Even street peddlers must win the Binay line or risk losing their permits to operate, they say.

Komersiyo his detractors as "Binay's army" those are the people who give the opposition their business on the street of Makati when called upon in return for a few pesos and the promise of free food.

The suggestion annoys the 63-year-old mayor as he earnestly his demonstrations for the helipad perched on top of the new city hall building.

"No sense? They are just poor people trying to improve their lives and today their frustrations. That is why they [opposition] are ... not well liked in a democracy." He is a close friend and ally of former president and film star Joseph Estrada and has remained loyal even after Estrada was deposed.

Asked if he harbors higher political ambitions such as the presidency, Binay smiles and says: "This city had been a constant revenue stream, it isn't fiction and well managed. Why should I give all this up for something that is not efficient or well run? ... So the easy thing, I am happy where I am."

AFP

BINAY

WOMEN from all sectors of society linked arms in a protest calling for an end to poverty and globalization yesterday. Participants gathered in Quezon City and walked all the way to Manila's Plaza Miranda. JOHN LOZADA

Actress, woman figure in scrape

By Edwin C. Tamayo Jr.

WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO be a fun badminton game turned into a heated argument after a female actress figured in a catfight with a 24-year-old woman in Brgy. City Wednesday afternoon.

Barangay Rachel Lubango, 36, and female Lyka Andrei Gonzales, as each scored in the charges against the other.

The fight happened at about 5 p.m. Wednesday as the Benedicto Court on Emgan Avenue. The police said.

According to Lasa, she was playing badminton with her friends when Lubangco arrived with her nanny and started "shouting and jogging her face" while talking to a friend.

Lasa said she asked them politely to transfer to an other bench.

But the apparently irked Lubangco allegedly walked at her and dared her to fight back.

Lasa said the nany was then allegedly throw a shuttlecock at her face and rushed at her holding a racket.

Lasa's father, who saw the confrontation, tried to intervene.

But in Lubangco's statement to the Brgy City Police, she accused Lasa and her father of pinning her on their backs on the different parts of the body.

She vowed to file charges against the two.

LUBANGCO

All-women march vs poverty

By DJ Yap

IN PRINT ORGANIZERS CLAIMED WAS ONE of the biggest gatherings of members of the fairer sex since Marilyn Law, women from all walks of life rush to the streets yesterday to protest against poverty and globalization.

Carrying streamers and colorful protest materials, thousands of women filed joined the "Martsa ng Kababaihan Laban sa Kahirapan at Globalisasyon" (Women's March Against Poverty and Globalization), walking from the corner of West and Quezon Avenues to Mabuhay Rotunda in Quezon City, where they staged a program on the negative impact of globalization on their gender.

It was also "first women (among many)" ito ay mga grupo mula sa women's issues before the pretend, and Sitenden Pilipina, convenor of the march. From the rotunda, the organizers marched toward Plaza Miranda in Manila.

The militants, representing a cross section of society from the urban and rural poor to peasants, workers, peasants and professionals, numbered between 2,500 and 3,000, according to human estimates. Organizers, however, placed the crowd at 7,000 although the Quezon City police counted only 5,000.

It was the biggest post-Marcos march completed efforts entirely of women, said Marilyn Baquiro, coordinator of the Global Call to Action against Poverty-Philippines.

Although a number of men also took part in the protest, they were only allowed to stay at the sidelines, said Fabros.

"This is a purely women's march," she said. Baquiro said the men were asked to stay in "new rooms," where they provided meals, water and moral support to the women.

"This is also a way of playing the traditional reproductive roles reserved for women. It's a reversal of gender roles," she said.

Coming from more than 300 groups, the women's march was timed days before the 6th World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong from Dec. 13-18, Bitra said.

Ten years under the WTO has not helped alleviate poverty in the country, Baquiro said, as the called for the scrapping of trade agreements entered into by the government.

The march is a massive multi-economic manifestation of women's contamination of power to the WTO, and globalization policies," added Ana Maria Serrano, president of the Freedom from Debt Coalition.

"Globalization and imperialism, women suffer the most when there's poverty. They face the greatest hardship when the government cannot provide social services including health and education," she added.

Serrano said the women "have had enough," and want something gender justice and equality as well as people's basic needs from government.

The women's rallying cry was: "Out of the bed, out of the kitchen, out of the field, out of the farms!"

MetroBriefs

Waterless in QC

SEVERAL areas in Quezon City will have no water beginning at 10 p.m. today until 4 a.m. Saturday, the Manila Water Company to be announced yesterday. The areas that will be affected are Tandang Sora, Area B, Capitol Homes, Quezon Avenue, Kennedy St. Martin, Bagong Ilocandia, Santa Cruz, Sampaloc IV, Del Monte Avenue, Mindanao Ave., Saint Dorbal and Landmark. Residents should store enough water prior to the scheduled water interruptions, call Manila Water's customer hotline at 1627 for updates.

Early Christmas for Muntii traders

CHRISTMAS came early this year for 2,000 businessmen in Muntinlupa City. On Wednesday, the local government released P1.8 million worth of checks to traders engaged in small-scale businesses in line with the "Tagalog Pabuhayan" or "Micro-Enterprise Financing Program." Variety stores and canteen owners, fish vendors, jeepney drivers, rice traders and other small entrepreneurs will receive amounts ranging from P5,000 to P40,000. The local government hopes that this will give them a good start for the coming year, said Jose Fabillaro, assistant to the head of the Small Businesses for the Family (SBF). Binay's daughter Jejomar B. By

Lacking in Yule spirit

THE HOLIDAYS may just be around the corner but Manila residents have yet to get into the spirit of the Christmas season. Barangay City Mayor Lito Atienza's appeal for his constituents to put up colorful decorations in front of their houses, many have refused to do so, saying they would rather spend their money on food. "We don't even have enough money to feed, how can we spend it on those decorations? We're not even sure if we can celebrate Christmas at all," newspaper and page write resident Honorato Bacho.

More traffic enforcers

THE LIGUNAN government has tapped 100 barangay watchmen to assist traffic enforcers this month in anticipation of the holiday rush that is expected to snarl traffic on city roads. Most of the watchmen have been stationed along the Barangay Cupang road where traffic is usually heaviest. The city has announced yesterday the salary of some 400,000 residents can file their daily, starting from the beginning of the month. To ease traffic flow, Mayor Imelda Aguilar has declared in force the "Friendship Routes" open until 11 midnight until the holiday season to help said Jimmy Cruz, city public information head. The "Friendship Routes" is a network of 200 streets in about 80 villages and subdivisions in the city, are alternative roads that Las Piñas motorists can take to avoid traffic along the Alabang-Zapote road. On regular days, the "Friendship Routes" are open only from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Jocelyn R. By

Holiday cheer in Makati

BEFITTING of the traditional street lighting and yuletide festivals display, the Makati City government will be switching its money on a number causes, heightening the holidays of some 12,000 "poorest of the poor" families by giving out P10 million worth of grocery gift certificates. Each family will receive a P1,000-gift certificate, which they can exchange for grocery items in the city's major supermarkets. The gift certificates can be exchanged from Dec. 20 to Jan. 2, 2006. Tarra Q. Quismundo

Nestor Jr., Anna Jasmin need help

AFTER KID KIDNEY OPERATION, 27-YEAR-old Nestor Bulilan Jr. is now on continuous medication for the rest of his life. His parents Nestor and Norma, despite having permanent jobs as security guards, earn barely enough for the cost of his medicines, which amount to as much as P21,000. Nestor and his parents are appealing to kindhearted readers for financial or medical assistance. Interested donors may contact them at 9320824 or ensure that donations through bank accounts to: SSS-1-30123-5 (Philippine National Bank – Taytay Rizal branch).

On the other hand, 10-year old Anna Jasmin Bulilan has been diagnosed with Lupus Nephritis, a liver disease she has had for three years now. Anna and her mother, Joanna, are appealing to kindhearted readers for financial and medical help for Anna Jasmin's regular dialysis sessions, which cost around P2,000 each. They are also hoping to raise enough amount to finance her liver transplant. Interested parties may contact 7838881 or 0921-2046526. Donations may also be sent directly to Investment Savings Bank (Makati Branch)'s account no. 0291000029.

NELOVIE

ROBLES

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DOJ rap includes Jaylo

By Armand N. Nocum

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAS INcluded Reynaldo Jaylo in the serious illegal detention charge it earlier filed against eight of Jaylo's men belonging to the disbanded Presidential Anti-Illegal Recruitment Task Force (PAIRTF) once headed by the retired police captain.

DOJ prosecutors filed the case against Jaylo in the Manila Regional Trial Court, saying all the accused had no authority to detain persons after July 9, 2005. Executive Order No. 325, the law creating the PAIRTF, provided the end of the body's term on that date, they added.

A raid by the National Bureau of Investigation on the PAIRTF headquarters, however, lead to the discovery that eight persons remained in detention there.

Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said this made Jaylo liable for the offense of serious illegal detention, and that there was probable cause to indict him for the alleged crime.

"Jaylo should likewise be indicted as coconspirator as he, in effect, maintained a private army and an office in the guise of a Task Force," Velasco noted. "A close analysis of the documentary evidence showed that he has no authority whatsoever to continue operating on his own and his co-conspirators' alleged anti-illegal recruitment activities under the name of the defunct PAIRTF," he added.

Velasco said that since Jaylo is being charged for a crime punishable by death, the former police officer would not be allowed to post bail. "Under Article 267 of the Revised Penal Code, if you detain a person for more than three days, that is serious illegal detention," Velasco added. "The victims were detained for several months. They should have been turned over to concerned government agencies such as the NBI or the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology."

QC to trace its historical roots

By DJ Yap

QUEZON CITY COUNCILORS HAVE PROposed the creation of a historical commission to trace the city's roots and publish a comprehensive book about its history.

Councilor Resty Malangen, one of the ordinance's authors, came up with the proposal after noting that there was a lack of literature on the city's origins and its development. "In order to inculcate patriotism and (a) sense of pride among the city's youth, it is imperative that they learn the history of Quezon City in school," he said.

Under the ordinance, the Quezon City Historical Commission will be composed of the city mayor, vice mayor and chairs of the city council's committees on education, science and technology, and cultural affairs and tourism. Other members include the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation chair, the school district superintendent, the city planning officer, and barangay chairs. The commission shall be tasked to come up with a history book or manual about Quezon City within six months of its creation.

It will engage the services of the Heograpiya, Kasaysayan at Sibika, or Hekasi, (Geography, History and Civics) unit under the Department of Education to gather, collect data, photographs and other historical documents for the book. Upon publication, the book shall be included as a reference in the Hekasi subjects taught in the city's private and public elementary schools.

The other proponents of the ordinance are Rommel Abesamis, Eric Medina, Francisco Calalay Jr. and Janet Malaya.

BUSINESS

CHEAPEST DIGITAL 2D-ECHOCARDIOGRAM DOPPLER TEST IN METRO MANILA

WHAT'S INSIDE

Slow drive / B3

Tax relief takes back seat to VAT

Gov't adopts cautious stance to keep revenue gains intact

By Michelle V. Rosca

PEOPLE MAY HAVE TO WAIT FOR SOME TIME before they can get to enjoy some tax relief.

The income tax relief, as proposed by the government, will only be implemented once the revenues expected from the VAT-Inst Law start to flow in.

According to an official from the Department of Finance, the earliest that the government may decide on the final form and amount of income tax relief will be in the second half of 2006.

By that time the government will have a clear view of the revenue performance of the new VAT law, the official said.

Also, once the plan has been finalized, it will have to undergo the legislative process, which the source said could take a few months.

Earlier, the DOF said the income tax relief plan could come in the form of income tax exemption for low income earners, combined with tax rate for middle-income ones, or expansion of the list of allowable deductions in the computation of taxable income.

Another proposed form of relief is to grant tax credits to low-income earners, which they may use to reduce their tax liabilities.

Part of the funds to be generated from the new VAT law would be used to compensate for the potential revenue losses expected with the proposed tax relief, the DOF said.

The source said the DOF was looking at P6 billion worth of income tax relief, which is a small

TAX STORY, B2

Tax law drags down vehicle sales

By Roncesvir M. Domingo

THE IMPLEMENTation of the new value-added tax law dragged down vehicle sales in November by 29.7 percent, with a total of 7,100 units sold compared to 9,907 units in the same month last year.

However, the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Champ) and the Truck Manufacturers Association reported that aggressive marketing activities helped cut up January-November sales, posting a growth rate of 18.2 percent to 87,996 units.

Champ president Elizabeth H. Lee said the implementation of the reformed VAT law led to advance purchases in October, but dealers were expected to be hesitant in stocking up units.

Lee said dealers were wary of the "first-month effect" of the 70 percent cap on the firms' input VAT credits.

"Both assemblers and dealers will have the difficult task of managing inventories," she said.

The Champ and TMA report showed that as of mid-November, sales have reached 90.6 percent of the target of 95,000 units for 2005.

Overall, sales are expected to increase in the last month, with the firms having put in place promotions to reach year-end targets, Lee said. "Companies are expected to take advantage of relatively better pricing until the end of the year, with additional free accessories deliveries."

Passenger car sales from January to November rose 7.5 percent to 50,426 units from 51,151 last year.

This was another effect of the introduction of new models, escalated financing promos and other marketing activities.

At the same time, commercial vehicle sales went up 32 percent due to expected new model sales from the pickup, compact SUV and 4x2 segments, as well as the availability of stocks.

January to October sales of commercial vehicles grew to 35,571 units from 40,797 units.

TAX STORY, B2

PPA board OKs North Harbor privatization

Gov't favors multi-operator scheme in the port

By Clarissa S. Bacino

THE BOARD OF THE PHILIPPINE PORTS AUthority has approved the privatization plan for North Harbor, which called for the bidding of four long-term contracts to operate three cargo terminals and one passenger terminal.

PPA general manager Oscar Sevilla said the decision-making agency would endorse the plan to the National Economic and Development Authority this week.

Sevilla said the modernization of North Harbor would entail massive investments, a factor considered in the past when the PPA had planned to bid out a single contract for the huge port facility serving domestic traffic.

However, the PPA believed that having several operators would encourage competition in North Harbor and compel operators to keep port fees low to the maximum facility operating Fees II to 18.

"The board, in its meeting Wednesday, gave its recommendation to go ahead with the privatization of North Harbor under the BOT (build-operate-and-transfer) law," Sevilla said in an interview.

He said a Neda representative to the NEB board assured that the economic planning agency's approval could not take more than a month.

The government will likely auction the 25-year contracts into par bundled in the first quarter of 2006. The contracts, said Sevilla, were renewable for another 25 years.

NORTH HARBOR's various terminals will be handled by different operators.

"Finally we can modernize an obsolete and decrepit terminal," said the PPA chief. "We always hear about the North Harbor's safety hazards of its age."

The country's two biggest port operators, International Container Terminal Services Inc. and Asian Terminals Inc., have expressed interest in participating in the bidding.

Sevilla said Terminals 1 and 2 of North Harbor would be the two biggest. The third terminal is not as large as the two and so is the passenger terminal.

The multi-operator scheme adopted by the PPA went against the original plan of having a single operator in North Harbor.

The proposal to privatize the North Harbor was first brought out during the Aquino administration. During the Estrada administration, the government capped Hutchison International to come up with the best scheme in selling the right to operate the Manila port.

Its recommendation was to bid out a single concession to a consortium big customers. ICTSI and ATI had planned to bid together for the project but the consortium never materialized.

ATI and ICTSI are engaged in handling of container and bulk cargoes. They operate in the Port of Ilocandia, the country's biggest port where most foreign ships carrying imported and to be exported goods dock.

Alyansa Agrikultura seeking fair trade

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

ON NOV. 20, 2004, THE ALYANSA AGRIKULtura started the international joint. At a trade conference in Penang, Malaysia, the Alyansa took the lead in formulating four WTO position agreed upon by seven sector representatives from 11 countries.

The following position is especially relevant to the coming WTO negotiations next week. "Trade should be in the service of sustainable development ... If a trade arrangement is detrimental to this, the country must reject it."

Background

Almost four years ago, on Jan. 21, 2002, several farmer and fisherfolk leaders organized the Alyansa Agrikultura. During their discussions on globalization, they concluded that our government implemented a trade liberalization pace much faster than what the WTO had required.

An example is rice, while the WTO allowed an average bound tariff rate of 26 percent for our agricultural products, our government applied an average of only 8 percent. Complaints with Thailand which, with the current 35 percent bound rate, applied 30 percent. Thankfully this is being addressed by enlightened government officials such as Agriculture Undersecretary Segfredo Serrano.

On Jan. 17, 2006, a year after elements instrumental consultations with farmer and fisherfolk, the Alyansa agreed on a common agri platform action agenda. A key part of this is their advocacy of fair, rather than free, trade.

By the time, the Alyansa had grown to become the largest agri-fishery coalition in the country. Its members were 19 national and local federations which covered all the major agricultural sectors. Accountable is the National Federation of Hog Farmers, which, though counted as only one member, has 38 affiliate organizations throughout the country.

On international trade, the Alyansa agreed with the following: Yes to our call to shortens tax survey; said that sector has a level playing field, through the appropriate elimination of subsidies from other countries and the provision of the appropriate competitive enhancing mechanisms for our farmers."

In the last two months, the Alyansa has taken the lead in spearheading farmer and fisherfolk signatures to the GRFM-coordinated campaign, by common advocacy on the agrarian door are: "make trade fair; no to unilateral in-

COMMENTARY

positions by the WTO; save our plans and protect our agriculture and domestic industries." We are happy to report that the 10 million signature worldwide target for the campaign will be reached and presented at Hong Kong.

Alyansa position

Today, the Alyansa is presenting to WTO Ambassador Manuel Teehankee its WTO position papers.

The Alyansa favors trade, but only if it is fair. The means a level playing field. Developed countries must to define (but as feeding tariffs, and therefore imposing lower tariffs in developing countries.

This is imperative and unfair. We must level the trouble of government support, which means tariffs plus subsidies.

Last year, in the WTO July 2004 Framework, the United States, the European Union and Japan reduced their maximum subsidy levels by 20 percent or $132.6 billion. However, this is still way above their 2004 actual subsidy level of $138.3 billion. Considering that the Philippines' subsidy level was only P8.3 billion in 2000, and has been declining over the last five years, we should not do

Slow drive

A PANGASINAN JUDGE WHO HAD ISSUED arrest warrants against the entire Audi board still would not lift the arrest orders despite a Department of Justice resolution reversing the P2.1-billion estafa complaint against the Germany-based directors.

For still unclear reason, Alaminos Regional Trial Court Judge Jules Mejia cancelled the hearing on Wednesday, to the annoyance of Audi lawyers who had to drive all the way from Manila, and reset the hearing for Tuesday next week.

Mejia had earlier insisted on proceeding with the trial, even though the complainants—former Audi distributors Peter and Paul Rodriguez—declined to post about P16 million in filing fees.

Theoretically, without payment of the filing fees, the Rodriguez private counsel would have no legal personality to appear in the criminal case, and it would be up to the fiscal to carry on the burden of what essentially is a private prosecution.

But with the DOJ reversing the Pangasinan prosecutor, it is not clear who would now have to represent the prosecution panel, assuming that there is still a criminal complaint to pursue.

The RTC judge's latest move effectively dashed the hope of Audi, and German Ambassador Axel Weishaupt, to end what they believe is a prolonged legal squeeze play and close the book on this unhappy saga by yearend.

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

Still, the legal problems have had no bar in related the new Audi dealer-distributor, PGA Cars, which has quietly made inroads in the local luxury market now dominated by BMWs, Volvos and Mercedes-Benzes.

According to the grapevine, the hush-hush buyers of the top-of-the-line A8 limo—which costs, depending on specs, anywhere from P5-12 million—already include the colorful Madrigal heir, Jose Vicente de Leon, and port services king Enrique Razon Jr.

Security blanket

THE SINGAPORE-BASED Artisaly Asean Fund has disclosed that it has acquired 5.02 percent of Security Bank.

According to the grapevine, the closed-end investment fund started slowly accumulating from the market Security Bank shares starting mid-2003, when the stock was still trading at the P15-17 level.

Yesterday, Security Bank closed at P33. Artisaly, which saw over 150 percent increase in its shareholding portfolio in five years, has also taken similar positions in Bankard and Universal Robina.

Campos layering

NEW Del Monte overlord Jose "Butch" Campos Jr. surely knows how to layer his investments from potential nosy inquisitors.

The investment holding company, Golden Chamber Investment Ltd., that has acquired a stake in Del Monte Pacific through NutriAsia Pacific Ltd. lists Campos and his children as the beneficial owners.

It is not clear whether the children referred to belong to Campos' first wife, or his second, or both.

In any case, Golden Chamber is in turn owned by the Twin Palms Pacific Trust, the Campos Jr. family trust. Legally, the sole shareholder of Golden Chamber is the Hong Kong-based HSBC International Trustee Ltd., which in turn identifies itself as the trustee of Twin Palms.

Meanwhile, NutriAsia, the special purpose vehicle used by Campos and San Miguel Corp. and trader T.Y. Ang (it is not clear whether SMC president Ramon Ang is related to him) to acquire Del Monte Pacific, lists an Ortigas address, the Centrepoint building on Julia Vargas Avenue, despite it being registered in the British Virgin Islands.

Heard through the grapevine

ISRAELI tycoon Lev Leviev and Metro Pacific have forged an alliance in their respective bids to acquire stakes in North Luzon Expressway and state-owned power plants.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pdinet.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Tax relief takes back seat to VAT

From page B1

fraction of the estimated P80 billion in additional tax collection that could be generated from the new VAT law.

But the official said that Finance Secretary Margarito "Gary" Teves would first want to make sure that the government would be on track of its objective—having a balanced budget by 2008. Once government has realized the expected revenue from the new VAT law next year, the authorities may then implement the tax relief scheme.

A cautious stance on proposals that could erode revenue is necessary to keep the country on track of its goal to balance the budget, the DOF official said.

The VAT Reform Law, which took effect last Nov. 1, expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity among others, and will raise the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent in February next year.

Unpopular as it is, the VAT is the Arroyo administration's key measure to address the country's lingering fiscal problem.

Should the VAT law generate the expected revenue, the DOF estimated that the government could wipe out its gaping budget deficit by the end of 2008. The deficit stood at P187 billion last year, and is expected to fall below P180 billion this year.

Tax law drags down vehicle sales

From page B1

Three sub-categories showed positive growth as AUV sales went up by 16 percent to 24,656 units; light commercial vehicles by 9 percent to 29,505 units; and trucks and buses by 23 percent to 623 units.

However, sales of light trucks dropped by 3 percent to 1,438 units.

Toyota Motors Philippines Corp. kept the largest portion of the overall market, with a 36.3-percent share. TMPC sold 31,983 units or 19.1 percent higher than the previous comparative number.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. ranked second with 13.6 percent of the market. MMPC sold 11,997 vehicles, which was an improvement of 3.7 percent.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. ranked third with a 10-percent share of the market. Honda sales reached 8,652 units, which was 8.34 percent lower than the previous level.

Shares . . .

From page B1

the session's trades.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index rose 10.18 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,113.60.

PLDT, which accounted for 51 percent of yesterday's transaction volume, rose 0.3 percent to P1,790.

Other gainers included blue chips Ayala Land, up 3.2 percent to P9.70, food and beverages conglomerate San Miguel, whose widely traded B-shares climbed 1.2 percent to P67, and oil refiner Petron Corp., which advanced 1.1 percent to close at P4.65.

Analysts said renewed political and security concerns capped the stock market.

Losers beat gainers 41 to 34, with 49 issues unchanged. AP

SEC OKs IPO of FirstGen

By Elisabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has approved the proposed initial public offering of First Generation Corp., the Lopez family's holding company for its power plants, to raise roughly $300 million.

Industry sources confirmed that the firm would hold its maiden listing in February next year.

First Gen will offer 351.97 million to 2.919 million shares at between P81 and P74 per share. Secondary shares of between 124 million and 141 million, held by First Philippine Holdings Corp. and other shareholders, may also be offered for sale.

First Gen is a 99.4-percent owned by First Philippine Holdings. The balance is distributed between Asian Infrastructure Development Co. PG Power Corp. Ltd., a $400-million investment fund involved in Asian power, infrastructure projects, and Sumitomo, one of the largest trading conglomerates in Japan.

Intel unveils $230-M plans for SE Asia

Chip maker aims to connect villages across the region

By Christine A. Esplana

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (INTEL.COM) HAS SET ASIDE $230 MIL. line to fuel its fruitfarest Asian expansion over the next two years, company chair Craig Barrett yesterday announced.

Intel aims to expand its facility in Kulim province here, and build additional production facilities in the Philippines and Thailand. The investments will allow the company to engage in product innovations over the coming years.

"Our new investments reinforced the company's long-standing commitment to the region, and this will emphasize that Southeast Asia is part of the company's digital agenda," Barrett said.

He said that the Asian region still remains the largest and the fastest growing market, in terms of sales and marketing of high technology products.

The investments will enable Intel to improve its leading technology and platform development, in support of a wide variety of Intel products.

Intel is still the world's largest computer chip maker, innovating and communications products.

According to Peter Cheung, Intel's director for sales and marketing for Southeast Asia, the Philippines and Malaysia have been leading in the field tests of wireless broadband connectivity known as the WiMAX.

The 80.802 will provide greater broadband connectivity over long-range distances, enabling the delivery of technology to areas previously not served.

"Intel's goal is an integrated region of connected villages, municipalities and countries that secure the full capabilities of technology," Barrett said. "This will be achieved through infrastructure enablement and broadband initiatives that are available, accessible and affordable."

Intel is currently in talks with Philippine telecommunications companies Globe Telecom Inc. and Smart Communications over the modest offer trials for the new broadband technology.

ICTSI submits highest bid for Guam port

By Clarissa S. Ocampo

INTERNATIONAL CONTAINER TERMINAL Services Inc., the country's largest port operator, has submitted the highest bid for a 16-year contract to handle cargo operations in the Port of Guam.

"We, the preferred bidder, ICTSI will be the first among the three bidders to negotiate an agreement with the (Guam) Port Authority to implement the terms of the proposal," the company said in a disclosure.

ICTSI, a company controlled by Enrique Razon, said it had formed a new unit called Guam International Container Terminal Inc. for this project.

The company operates the Manila International Container Terminal. It also has projects in Poland and Brazil.

A subsidiary called Madagascar International Container Terminal Services Ltd. will invest more than $30-million (roughly P1.62 billion) in a port project in Toamasina, Madagascar.

In October, ICTSI formed a joint venture company with Australia-based Anglo Ports Pty Ltd for a A$200-million investment to operate container terminals such as Sydney's Port Botany, the Port of Melbourne, and the Port of Fremantle in Western Australia.

Razon, company chair and president, said in earlier reports that ICTSI had also submitted bids for projects in countries such as Russia and Nigeria. He said opportunities in China and Japan were also being considered.

In the meantime, ICTSI grew its profits by 14 percent to P605-million in the third quarter from P530-million in the same period in 2004 due to robust contributions from its international operations.

ICTSI said foreign operations contributed 62 percent of the third quarter's consolidated net income, higher than the 54 percent share in July to September of 2004. It suffered a net loss in the third quarter of 2005.

ICTSI handled consolidated volume of 400,010 twenty-foot equivalent units or TEUs during the third quarter, down by about 5 percent from the 419,452 TEUs in the same period last year.

Razon was quoted in reports after ICTSI's stockholders' meeting months ago that the North American markets weren't very attractive for the company's expansion strategy.

"The margins for North America are low as container in Asia. We're looking at a couple of things there but it's not as profitable," Razon was quoted as saying.

In Manila, ICTSI said it had broken for the fourth straight year the one million TEU mark at the Manila port. Since it started operations at the Manila International Container Terminal in 1988, it had already handled over 13 million TEUs.

A TEU is a measure of containerized cargo equal to a standard size of 20 foot length of 8 ft. width and 8.5 ft. in height.

ICTSI said that it broke the one-million TEU mark earlier this year compared to 2004, a trend, which it said reflected the steady growth in volumes at the Manila port.

Investments Funds of	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
	Dec. 5, 2005	Nov. 28, 2005
Fixed Income Fund	1.066891	1.070045
Balanced Fund	1.075781	1.072389
Equity Fund	1.091951	1.088334

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SOLARIS Java

DOTC told to ready terms for MRT-7 challenge

MALACAÑANG HAS ORDERED THE Department of Transportation and Communication to prepare the terms that will govern next year's Swiss challenge for Universal LRT Corp.'s P1.35-billion unsolicited proposal for Metro Rail Transit-7, a transportation official said.

Interested investors will be given the opportunity to present proposals better than the bid of Universal LRT in the first semester of 2006, however, the original proponent has the right to match the best bid.

The Cabinet-level Investment Coordination Committee is scheduled to give its final decision on the proposal of Universal LRT on Dec. 14. The company had proposed to build a 22-kilometer, [illegible] mass transport system from San Jose in Bulacan to North Edsa, dubbed the MRT-7.

The project includes a 174-hectare real estate development, the construction of a 23-km road in Bulacan and of a 20-hectare bus and train depot also in Bulacan.

The SM Group owns 60 percent of MRT-7's real estate ventures and 25 percent of the railway project, according to Eli Lewis, president of the consortium.

Universal LRT grouped several local and foreign companies, including Itochu, Alstom, China Railway 16, 433 Corp. of the Yachengxin and Minfu Capital of the Yang family, George Goyal Equitable PCI and engineer Sergio Ortiz-Luis are directors of the company.

Lewis said the consortium finally [illegible] sensitive issues involving government subsidy and was now preparing for next year's Swiss challenge.

In the absence of other bidders, the government will award the final contract to MRT-7 and the consortium can still ensure its financial closing by mid-2006, a DOTC official said.

"This is a vital transport project especially with the growing congestion of major roads in Metro Manila," said Lewis in an interview.

The consortium's real estate project will create 25,000 jobs in 20 years.

Lewis said groups opposing the project were given until Dec. 14 to file their objections. "It is better for the Senate and the Congress to investigate now, if they plan to, rather than later."

But some form of government subsidy is inevitable in a project like MRT-7, which is committed to charge the same fares as the existing LRT Lines 1 and 2 and MRT-3.

"The real estate ventures will subsidize the railway operations," said Lewis.

"If we charge the economic fare it will move fly." Based on MRT-7's proposal, it will charge a fare of P29 per passenger, much lower than the "economic fare" of P80.50 each.

Universal LRT wants the government to shoulder the payment for $600 million worth of foreign cost of a 15-year period. All operations and maintenance cost will be shouldered by the consortium.

The government, said Lewis, would not shell out anything while the railway line was wasted operations. Construction will commence upon financial closing and will take three to four years.

Once the ICC had given its final approval, Universal LRT will initiate talks with the International Finance Corp. or how the World Bank now would invest in or lend to the project.

Subsidy issue between gov't and proponent now settled

Rice row threatens Asean-South Korea free trade deal

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT THE PEN 2005

Welcome the festive season with the 22nd year of Christmas Concert at The Pen with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra performing a beautiful program of festive music under the baton of guest conductor Maestro Ruggero Barbieri. Then listen to the songs of the holidays as special guests Vienna-based soprano Camille Lopez, Philippine Children's Choir from Mandaluyong and the University of the Philippines Concert Chorus bring to life well-loved carols that reflect the true spirit and meaning of Christmas.

Christmas Concert at The Pen 2005 is on 11 December 2005, Sunday, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at The Lobby.

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INQUIRER

THE PENINSULA
MANILA

Alyansa . . .

Ayala electronics arm eyes foreign listing …

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INGHAI CLOSER TO IPO GOAL OF DECEMBER: a major player in Asia, Ayala-led Integrated Microelectronics Inc. (IMI) plans to list its shares on the stock markets of either Singapore, Japan, United States or Hong Kong in the next two to three years.

The plan to list shares abroad was boosted by the firm's recent mergers with a Singapore-based electronics firm.

In a press conference yesterday, company president Arthur Ty said that "opportunities have opened up in the region" after IMI completed its merger with Singapore-based electronics manufacturing service (EMS) provider Speedy-Tech Electronics Ltd. last Dec. 6.

Ty said IMI is still looking at a possible listing on the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) or a "cross-border" listing in other Asian bourse or in other international markets.

Ty said IMI is studying a possible listing in Japan since that is the firm's biggest market.

"In IPO in the US is also an attractive option since Orli acquired US parent after to purchase of the electronics manufacturing assets in California. Based there is Infineon Technologies Sensing [Texas] Inc. and its Philippine subsidiary Sensors Electronics Philippines, Inc.

The Hong Kong bourse is also another prospect because of its proximity to the Chinese production facilities of Speedy-Tech, which also operates plants in Singapore and the Philippines.

Propelled by its merger and new customers, IMI expects to grow its revenues to $500 million by 2008 from $118 million in 2004. As of October this year, said revenues have already hit $160 million.

IMI is also banking on further expanding its production facilities in China and the Philippines.

IMI landed its $106-million merger with Speedy-Tech with an $80-million loan from banks and internally generated cash.

Even after its merger with Speedy-Tech, IMI is still searching for new acquisitions in Asia.

IMI had said its merger is a significant step towards forming a strong and sized electronics manufacturer in the Asia-Pacific region. The merger will also allow both firms to leverage each other's strengths in their respective markets and gain access to a broader and more diversified customer base. The integrated suite of operations will better position the merged entity to secure larger and more attractive outsourcing contracts from both existing and prospective customers.

Based on the latest 2006 audited financial results of both Speedy-Tech and IMI, the merged entity would have combined revenues of roughly $265 million and profits of about $20 million.

Macquarie Securities (Asia) Pte. Limited is the financial adviser to IMI. DBS Bank Ltd is the financial adviser to Speedy-Tech, while UBS Securities Pte. Ltd. is the independent financial adviser to the Speedy-Tech board.

IMI is 75.7-percent owned by Ayala Corp. It has manufacturing facilities in Laguna and Cebu, as well as engineering and design centers in Alabang and in Irvine, California. Speedy-Tech, on the other hand, has three production facilities in China, one in Singapore, and one in Cavite.

… As parent firm readies power sector investments

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY of entering the energy sector, Ayala Corp.-led Ireland Midlands Power Inc., a special purpose company entered toward power generation.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Ayala managing director Renato Valencia said the establishment of Midlands Power was "part of the company's study to explore potential investments in the power sector."

The special purpose firm's incorporation papers had already been filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, he said.

Earlier in the year, Ayala treasurer and chief financial officer Delfin Lazaro told the business that the potential of the power sector aroused the conglomerate's interest.

He said the group's primary objective, however, is to support the government's privatization efforts.

"We are looking at power and the energy sector embedded to be privatized," he said. "Ayala has not arrived at any concrete decisions, even the decision to bid for any particular asset. We have simply included energy in our area to consider to see plans to grow the business."

Although it has yet to win a concrete acquisition plan for its foray into the power sector, is well placed to secure earlier said that Ayala had expressed interest in participating in the privatization of the Philippine National Oil Energy Development Corp.

Other local firms eyeing PNOC-EDC are Alsons Equity Ventures, Trans-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp. and Aboitiz Power Corp., all of which have existing power sector investments.

The Ayala group said all aspects of the power business, including generation and transmission, are being explored and reviewed.

The group is also monitoring developments in the yet-to-be-implemented wholesale electricity spot market to enable it to participate in the competitive arm of the electricity bourse on its overall business, should it decide to plunge into the power industry.

Abigail L. Ho

Seaoil to expand in '06

By Abigail L. Ho

WITH OIL PRICES STABILIZING and the expanded value-added tax (VAT) law already implemented, Seaoil Petroleum Corp. has lifted its investment moratorium, earmarking close to P500 million to put up 20 stations in next year.

Seaoil president Glenn Yu said the company would again be investing to expand its current 120-station network nationwide by 2006.

Each station would cost around P15 million, bringing the oil firm's potential capital outlay to at least P300 million, he said.

Of the 20 new stations, he said 13 would be in Luzon, four in the Visayas and seven in Mindanao.

"We're seeing stable oil prices next year and we also see a very stable outlook for the country," he told reporters.

Seaoil's new investments would only pose the establishment of new stations. To add the oil firm's existing depot in Mandaluyong, which had a capacity of 20 million liters, it will refurbish its depot and storage facilities in Batangas.

In the past years—except last year and this year, when it imposed a moratorium on new investments…Seaoil had been spending between P200 million and P300 million to strengthen its branch network.

Seaoil imposed a moratorium on new investments during the last two years due to high operating costs.

Yu said in an earlier interview that Seaoil had already set aside P300 million last year for the expansion that was not delivered. The oil firm would tap that amount without the need for additional cash infusions.

"Our 2004 capex was already set. We will continue those [projects] that we've already committed to do. But we're not adding to that," he said.

SEC OKs IPO …

First Page 8

First Toro will test the proceeds of the IPO to power its bid for big-sized generation assets of the government which are up for bidding, improve existing facilities, expand capacity or develop new projects.

First Toro is studying the possibility of bidding for the government's combined 700-megawatt (MW) geothermal complex in Tiwi, Albay, and in Laguna and Batangas provinces.

Industry sources said First Gen had already secured necessary documents from the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM)—the government agency tasked to undertake the sale of the country's idle power generation assets—for evaluation.

Sources added that the bidding might take place in December although this could not be immediately confirmed with PSALM.

Last September, PSALM issued an invitation to investors for the bidding of the government's geothermal complex consisting of the 275-MW Tiwi power plant located in Tiwi, Albay, and the 432.75-MW Makiling-Banahaw plant in Laguna and Batangas.

Vegetable industry woes up in WTO meet

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET — THE PROVINCE'S vegetable industry leaders hope that nine world's 5th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Hong Kong would tackle the woes of local farmers whose livelihood has been affected by global trade.

Vegetable importation and the non-implementation of protection measures were just some of the concerns that continue to hurt the vegetable industry, said Board Member John Kiln.

"There are 10 issues to be discussed in the forum. We hope that we will be given a venue to present our position on the economic impact of trade liberalization on the province's vegetable production," Kiln said.

Kiln, the provincial board's committee chair on agriculture, was named by the Department of Agriculture as a member of the official team of advisers for the Agriculture and Trade Department for the conference on Dec. 13 to 18.

The conference will gather 149 WTO member countries to discuss core issues on unresolved trade that have been left hanging following the collapse of the 6th ministerial conference in Cancun, Mexico in 2003.

The conference will discuss tariff reduction measures that local vegetable farmers are expected to observe, Kiln said.

Developments in the international trade as envisioned by the WTO would impact on the local vegetable industry whose contribution to the country's agricultural economy cannot be downplayed, he said.

Kiln said there were four issues that needed to be addressed to the forum since they directly affect local vegetables — government subsidy to farmers, tariff reduction, market access and sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) or standards on cleanliness and on the presence of pests and diseases in the product.

The province is home of the country's major vegetable producers like peasants, cabbage, carrots, broccoli, celery, cauliflower, pepper and lettuce.

The year-round production of these vegetables has given life to 40,000 families or 122,000 farmers who produce 75 percent of the country's vegetable needs.

But the importation of vegetables, both legal and illegal, has hurt the market for local vegetables, Kiln said.

He said the problem is supposed to worsen once tariffs on imported vegetables reach the zero level as mandated by the WTO.

The country imported 40,419 metric tons of fresh vegetables from 1995 to 1996.

This increased to 101,650 metric tons from 1995 to 2003.

Kiln said the local vegetable industry has lost millions of pesos in failed transactions due to the entry of imported vegetables.

He said the WTO must consider the plight of the local vegetable industry by ensuring a uniform rate of tariffs and the elimination of government subsidies to farmers in other countries.

"Our farmers do not enjoy these subsidies," he said. Delmer Cariño, PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

THE DELEGATION of Filipino farmers headed by Hong Kong for the nine-d from Benguet and other parts of the Cordillera. They have been leaving the possibility of losing their centuries-old trade due to "unfair trade practices"

Transco sees power lack in Mindanao

DATEL

DAVAO CITY—The National Transmission Corp. (TransCo) expects a power outage in the Mindanao in 2008, unless new power generating plants are built on the island.

Transco president Alan Ortiz described 2008 and 2009 as "critical" years for Mindanao, if government would not act on the urgent need to build new hydro power plants or rehabilitate existing aging plants.

Ortiz said the global standard power surplus is pegged at 20 percent of generation to avoid a power shortage.

"At present, the country has a gold with (power) surplus of 31.3 percent, which is not even achieved in Mindanao," Ortiz said. "We (will remain) below the normal standard unless somebody will invest in power plants in Mindanao."

Bonifacio Gonzaga, Transco vice president for project management, said Transco was looking at a shortfall of 100-150 megawatts (MW) in 2008, which will escalate to power interruption of up to three hours a day.

He said Mindanao was faced with a power shortage due to the increasing demand for electricity in the region.

Gonzaga said this unfortunately foreign investors were not so keen on venturing into the power industry in Mindanao because of the huge capital required.

Gonzaga said TransCo was considering tapping power from Leyte through the Mindanao-Leyte power connection as a quick solution to meet rising demand.

He said TransCo has also informed Congress of the need to privatize all generating plants owned by the National Power Corp. (Napocor) to provide Mindanao with the additional power.

He said privatizing Napocor would also help ease the budget needed to connect the Mindanao grid to the Visayas network. Andy Quiroz, PIA Mindanao Bureau

Investments in Mindanao down in Q3

DAVAO CITY—INVESTMENTS IN SOUTHern Mindanao showed drawn in the third quarter of the year due to lingering concerns over peace and order and security.

Shelly Cruz, Trade and Industry Director for the region, said the majority of foreign investors have instead poured their money to Luzon and Visayas.

But while investments in Region 11 showed down, Cruz said Davao City's economy recovered during the period due to its improving peace and order situation.

Cruz attributed this to Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's aggressive moves against criminals.

"The peace and order situation in Davao City is a big factor. Behind (it) improved investment," she said.

Cruz said she was hellish about the region's economy next year with eight industries showing impressive performances.

"The strength of the region's economy hinges on the local executives' efforts to improve the business environment," Cruz said. "Local leaders are investing a lot in infrastructure to improving the business economy."

Bienvenido Caringa, president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (DCCCII), said business in Mindanao generally slowed down because people do not have enough money to buy goods due to high oil prices.

Caringa said that for business to thrive next year, there should be a major political change in the country. Andy Quiroz, PIA Mindanao Bureau

...eat of WTO talks will include indigenous Filipino ... funds and services for centuries and they face the ...increasing world agriculture. REUTERS

WTO faces tough talking in Hong Kong

EU-US impasse on much criticized farm subsidies takes center stage

HONG KONG—THE WORLD TRADE Organization (WTO) teams here were vowed to salvage a deal to liberalize global trade blocked by an EU and US impasse on cutting massive farm subsidies that critics say hurt the poor most.

Preparatory talks have produced only a series of "yes/but" trade offers and no basis for an overall deal whereby the developed world would open its agricultural markets to extend far less access to the developing world for its industrial goods and services.

The main protagonists—the European Union and the United States along with India, Brazil and Japan—have accordingly downgraded expectations, saying the Hong Kong meeting should keep the Doha Round on course while leaving a final accord for next year.

At the same time, nearly all parties agree on the need to agree on at least something, most likely measures to achieve development goals such as poverty reduction which would be extremely unconventional.

The world scrapped a repeat of the Cancun, Mexico debacle in 2003, when the Doha Round negotiations nearly ran into the sands, and ensure some momentum for the further talks in 2006, when an accord must be reached.

Blessing at the weekend, the Group of Seven industrialized countries called for significant progress on "reducing trade distorting domestic support (and) ... eliminating all forms of export subsidies in agriculture."

Ambitiously, and perhaps more realistically, the "opportunity must be seized to make progress through agreeing a comprehensive development package that addresses the concerns of developing countries," a G7 statement said.

The stakes are high by any count, with the World Bank estimating that a Doha accord could boost the global economy by some $300 billion annually through an expansion in trade which is largely unfettered by all.

That is the theory, but the devil is in the details as broad statements of support for the process soon get bogged down in the more mundane but difficult question of who gets what and when?

Washington is the main exponent of the unqualified free trade agenda, in keeping with its own experience and ideology.

"The United States will continue to push for substantial improvements in market access in agriculture, manufacturing and services because this will generate the most benefits for developing countries, including poverty reduction," US Trade Representative Rob Portman said after the G7 meeting.

The Doha Round "can generate global growth and reduce poverty but only if we achieve a high level of ambition in all areas of the negotiations," he added.

For its part, France, pilloried as a champion of farm protection at the expense of a possible agreement, says its second on agriculture tariffs may not necessarily help the poorest nations, as supposed aim, but instead benefit those developing countries that already have strong farm sectors.

Then there is the temptation that in the absence of a global accord, many countries will opt for bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTA), as often happening the multilateral trade system, a process already underway in Asia. AFP

Asian stocks down, gold up

SINGAPORE—GOLD SOARED TO A 24-year peak on Thursday as funds poured money into commodities, and Asian stocks fell while the dollar held below a 11-month high against the yen.

Oil made slight gains above $59 a barrel, after falling on Wednesday when US inventory data showed unexpectedly healthy supplies and ended in lower rally above the $60 mark.

Asian share markets were lower, with Tokyo's Nikkei ending the morning session down 0.5 percent. MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian shares was 0.4 percent lower at almost noon yesterday.

"The Nikkei is firmly supported by gains in chip-equipment makers. That's mainly because of favorable news from Texas Instruments," said Susumu Abe, manager at Mito Securities' information and investment department.

Taiwan's benchmark index fell 0.7 percent, led by banking shares such as Chinatrust, which was down 0.9 percent as lawmakers prepared to pass legislation capping interest rates on credit cards.

Spot gold was trading around $517.20 an ounce, after earlier touching $517.90, its highest since April 1981.

Inflation worries have boosted demand for the safe haven metal, pushing gold to multi-year peaks in recent days.

Bond shares fell 0.3 percent after South Korea's central bank unexpectedly raised interest rates for the second time in three months.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng was 3.5 percent lower, Singapore's Straits Times shed 0.7 percent and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 traded 0.3 percent lower.

Japanese government bond futures climbed for a third straight session as stock indexes retreated. Benchmark 10-year yields were unchanged at 1.505 percent. Reuters

Piracy rampant, report reveals

AMSTERDAM—SOFTWARE PIRACY IS DAMPENING and hampering economic growth, and it is increasingly in the hands of organized groups which are regarded as legitimate businesses in some countries, a survey said on Thursday.

The global piracy rate is currently around 35 percent, running down only 1 percent a year, research group IDC found in a study commissioned by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) which represents around 50 software firms.

"A key trend over the last two or three years is organized piracy which has become a legitimate business in some countries," said Shaun Brown, IDC's consulting director.

The study, covering 79 countries which represent 99 percent of the world's information technology spending, said that a worldwide reduction of software piracy by 10 percentage points in 20 years could generate 2.6 million jobs and $400 billion of economic growth.

The battle against software piracy has been relatively successful over the last 15 years, with the piracy rate in Europe dropping to 35 percent from almost 80 percent in 1992 when the European authorities adopted special legislation.

Still, a 35-percent piracy rate is more than 20 times higher than the percentage that retail stores lose through shoplifting, said Herb Stoll, European vice president for the BSA.

While software pirating "normally" is engrossed thickness differs from stealing material goods, it has a real effect on the economy by curving revenues and limiting software companies' ability to invest in products, she said.

"Some companies know they are losing 40 percent of their business. If their credit scoring fail, they could employ more people," she said.

Dominique Perdigues, chief executive of French image-based creation software firm Realviz estimates it misses out on as much as 50 percent of sales.

"Without piracy we could increase revenue by 20 to 30 percent. As the very least, this would mean that there would be both funds available for investment to hire 7 to 10 additional staff in research and development," he said.

Asia's worst piracy rate is high at 68 percent in China and 57 percent in Russia. The United States has a modest 21 percent piracy rate. Reuters

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

Big firms demand refund from Meralco

By Roland W. Dantago

THE FEDERATION OF PHILIPPINE Industries yesterday expressed impatience with distribution giant Manila Electric Co. over its alleged delay in refunding its biggest customers of some P16.4 billion in power charges.

Collected between February 1999 and May 2003, the amount represents the 15.7 centavos per kilowatt-hour difference between what the industries paid and what Meralco was allowed to charge its customers.

The Supreme Court ruled in April 2003 that Meralco should return the excess charge that totaled about P29 billion to all its customers.

Meralco has complained the refund for residential customers but has yet to cope with commercial and industrial customers.

In a statement, FPI president Jesus L. Arranza complained that it was now more than two years since the High Court issued its final decision but big customers "have yet to collect a single centavo."

"The release of the refund, which is long overdue, would help a lot of industries that are facing financial difficulties at this time," Arranza said. "Meralco should comply with the SC decision."

He said earlier attempts to settle the refund scheme failed when businessmen disagreed with Meralco's proposal to spread the refund due to commercial and industrial customers over a period of eight to 10 years.

But according to Meralco officials, the utility was still processing the required papers from customers to determine how much each company would receive.

Based on the refund procedure, customers also need to submit to Meralco their application papers with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to give it an idea of how much of the refund would be withheld as taxes.

OLE! to hassle-free gift shopping /C2

LIFESTYLE

Lito Chito Banal-Fontinos

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY ZEST • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

Winners and losers in 2005

"I HAVE TAMERITS older than you!"

That's the best line I heard last week. Uma Thurman, 35 years old, in the romantic comedy "Prime," going up a gorgeous but only 20 years old Bryan Greenberg on their first date.

I'm not about to go into the art of really matching, however. There are better authorities and savanters for that. Was rang a bell in me was the T-shirt, now vintage!

Amazingly, vintage continued to reign in 2005, meaning anything from the '80s and earlier than that. Even love, dresses, bags, to really anything in your kid's wardrobe. "Hip-pie" is today's bohemian chic.

Apart from vintage, here are the winners of 2005, in my book at least:

Jeans, denim and more jeans. Even for after six "dressy" events, you can't go wrong with jeans, it seems. In various washes and cuts (from boot- to '70s bell-bottoms, and the latest, cropped at the knee like riding pants), with various embellishments, jeans are the perfect fit for all age groups.

And the search for the perfect fit is unending. Designer Jun Cabrera carried a niche by creating made-to-fit dresses. So "Talk Movie," Paje Layral advised going for white denim in '06. In London, there's Bodymetrics, which uses scanning technology that takes exact measurements of a customer's figure.

Minis—from the ultra-feminine, girlish and frilly to the bubble skirt. I honestly thought bubble wouldn't take off, but apparently it is catching on, in low flamboyant form.

Sobrero. Hardly a day passes by when I don't see someone in our magazine staff wearing one. They frequent a store in Mercurville for those.

Boots, especially if you know how to pull it off. Mar Lara Gaspi does, unfailingly from work to the red carpet.

"Designer" or what I call "artisan" bags. This is a hobby or artisan outlet that has turned good business in many cases. Such Cases, Bea Valdez, Sonia Araneta, Michiels Jones, to name a few. Still a favorite in '05.

Embellished shoes and sandals—from beaded, sequined footwear that flooded the market from China and Korea. When they sport a fine capsule containing them, connoisseurs fashionistas should readily say "2005."

Wedges. It saved us from stilettos in 2005. God is merciful after all.

Lace, it works.

Mall Shopping Mall. Who hasn't been there? It made Duriscris a for ladies who-lunch scene. It also told me where the rest of the Chinese and Korean populations are in the world.

Arts. A success by any measure, it held the other end of the retail spectrum and reportedly made several millions on its first weeks.

Metallics, especially bags. See us too, polite as the jelly bully of '04, but still ubiquitous enough.

Eyelash extension. It didn't make Ricky Reyes into a multi-millionaire (yet again) the soap complete person did, but it still brought in the masses by the droves.

Empire cut or the baby doll silhouette. It came in the waves of women wanting to hide their "pasco" (that stood in nine and a half out of 10 Filipinas). Reggie Gorbon brought it to the level of haute couture when he paraded his high glam Empress Josephine gowns in black silk chiffon with gold silk lamé inner layers in last week's Metrowear.

Tinted baby powder. In pink, yellow and blue, Rench has a winner in this tint velum powder line. The loose powder is light enough for our low weather, and the pink one gives you a natural blush 24/7, from the suite next to the office.

Monique Lhuillier. Her star continues to shine. Breaking into Hollywood, then into New York fashion week is no mean feat.

Dra Uemura Pensions. Reliable sur pe-

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Simeon Sato Anore

tection that doesn't have a gen on your face.

Belo makeovers. From mesotherapy to Hermage. In Vik Belo seems to have the golden touch. In '05, mainstream acceptance of liposuction and non-surgical facelift became so palpable. One magazine got me get letters from readers as young as 18, wanting a Belo makeover. That drop a basket promotion.

WEDGES. Yellow leather and canvas platform ankle-strap wedge with leather appliques by Prada; multicolor leather appliques on mesh strap shoes wedge by Louis Vuitton and salmon-and-orange weave patent leather wedge with heel strap by Bottega Veneta

BOLERO. Carmen Delgado in a Flamenco-inspired long dress with black Bolero by Rhett Eala

(FASHION)

CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Sexy picks and luxe finds

If store hopping is not your thing, be a smart Santa and hit just one shop for all the fashionistas on your list. Spanish brand Zara has all the trendiest clothes and accessories for all sizes and shapes of *femmes* under its roof at the Power Plant in Rockwell

Seven years of brilliance and color

BUTTERFLY brooch with 0.83-carat moissanite, 3.26-carat multi-colored sapphire, 0.70-carat tourmaline in 18-karat white gold

FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, Mokanite Philippines has made available to Filipinos the sparkling glow of Moissanite jewellery. It was in 1998 when Charles and Colvard, the US-based company which produces and markets Moissanite, granted Mokanite Philippines the first offshore distribution rights of this valuable gem.

To celebrate this milestone, a new Moissanite collection features colored stones of exceptional brilliance and expressed in elegant designs. An array of rubies, sapphires and tourmalines are expertly crafted with Moissanite gems and 18-karat gold to make for stylish jewelry.

Moissanite, also known as silicon carbide, is a stunning gem which has fire and brilliance unlike any other. Naturally occurring crystals of silicon carbide are too small and too few for any jewelry. However, using advanced technology, this rare mineral is duplicated to produce a gem with superior optical properties that glows more shine than any other gem.

Moissanite has gained a loyal following among celebrities like Destiny's Child, Mariah Carey, Brooke Shields and Hunter Tylo. In the Philippines, those his celebrities such as Dina Bonnevie, Bea Aquino, Lara Mendiola and Lea Salonga wear Moissanite now.

Moissanite Jewellery is available in Glorietta 1, SM City North Edsa, SM Megamall and SM City Dasma. Call 8950828/9561962/8370800, or visit www.moissanitephil.com

DANGLING bar in 18-karat white gold with 6.30-carat moissanite and 5.73-carat pink and blue sapphire

EARRINGS with hearts, 0.10-carat moissanite, 0.34-carat ruby in 18-karat white gold

MOISSANITE round ring in 18-karat white gold with 0.53-carat moissanite center stone and 0.50-carat yellow sapphire

High-end jeans promo

DKNY FALL 2005 Ladies Collection

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE holidays, "Caught in the Act!" is a promo offered on all regular DKNY and DKNY Jeans items. For an accumulated purchase of P15,000 on any regular merchandise, you are entitled to a DKNY gift (umbrella or cosmetic kit or tote bag).

Purchases must have been made from Sept. 31-Oct. 31, at the following DKNY stores: Rustan's Makati, 118 Designers' Blvd. Alabang, Powerplant Mall and Greenbelt 4. To claim gift, just present your valid receipts indicating the accumulated purchase of P15,000 and fill out the customer information card.

Gift may be claimed until 60 days from end of promo period.

DKNY's Classical Renaissance collection offers short, tailored jackets with asymmetric ruffled edges and cinched or bow lapels. Colors are rich and vivid, in lavish fabrics like antiqued velvet, ruffle and layers of silk.

DKNY gives new meaning to day-to-evening dressing with tops with intricate details such as neck insets, embroidered beads, and rich tapestry which are also present in textured shrugs and trendy cardigans.

Brace yourself for the arrival of cool weather with a coat to buried shearling, embroidery or tapestry, a sequined chiffon jacket, an all-string bare top, or a dramatic strapless dress.

For easy pair off these finely-crafted pieces with bottoms that range from casual to tailored to romantic.

DKNY is exclusively distributed by Ikumi Specialties, Inc., with shops located at the Power Plant Mall, Rustan's Makati, 118 Designers' Blvd., and Greenbelt 4, Ayala Center.

Winners and losers in 2005

DESIRES

SKIRT: Yellow Edwardian riders by Mel Vergel de Dios

South Beach Diet—a "trend" carried over from '04. While I can't stay away from carbs and sweets that long, I know of a few who can, like Aussie footballers. Our friend Moncher Olivan is simply a success story. He's shaved off 60 lbs for over a year now and senses fashion with relish and splendor again, so I help myself to pancit bihi Bonanzinha.

I Can Serve. Like '04, '05 was a year that saw a few friends and acquaintances, in their late 30s and early 40s, being diagnosed with cancer. It's an inexplicable tragedy that's made bearable only by the fact that cancer survivors, like Ken's ex-pals and Bibeth Orteza, are steadfast in their resolve to reach out to other cancer patients through the I Can Serve Foundation. It proves to you that courage is immortal.

IBA Ganun at Idolatry, independent filmmakers like Raymund Lee who won for his "Ang Pagkadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros." Fantasy Award-winner Rito Nonato-ito. Ito'y produser ko. Sa TV Network in Los Angeles and won the Emmy for Best Short Drama, "Good Boy." Young people like them are good harvest in the dead of winter than in the Pinoy popsfer.

And the '05 losers

Shooting—and we don't mean the SEA Games.

Overstating of fashion. To shoot, they load up on layers and layers of clothes (hat, bonbons, overskirts—throw in the entire inventory) and accessories, then Photoshop in the fantasy background, then splash on the most ornate graphics. Can't leave well enough alone. Talk to the market, don't smother it.

Ortho colonizers. Didn't make a hair this year.

Cavitar pit stars. Who cares who really 'invented' the stuff?

Everybody's mangge. We don't hear anymore of the pilgrimage there.

For the beauty buff who has everything

SHU UEMURA Foundation kit

BEAUTY ADDICTS MAKE THE BEST hostage for women, as they put a lot of thought on the perfect gift to give their girlfriends.

They know your skin type and skin concerns more than you do. They also instinctively know what fragrances or makeup colors would suit and please you best.

Hunt them down one errant day (trust! Mr knows what a fellow beauty addict loves: beauty products!) they giving her the right one is pretty tricky as she knows exactly what she wants, and if you intend to give her colors or a fragrance, there is no 50-percent chance it won't meet her criteria and will be all wrong for her.

Here are some foil-safe suggestions.

Beauty booty

Why not something to stash her goodies in, like Samsonite's beauty cases and Shu Uemura's makeup boxes? A true beauty addict would rather lose the rest of her luggage than her beauty booty.

I always hand-carry my loot when I travel, so I consider it up there, along with jewelry, as among my most treasured possessions.

My top three choices for beauty luggage would be: the Stratmage Beauty Case (P6,990) in bronze, which is the most glamorous of all; the Samsonite RPC beauty Case (P4,990) in black and the Silhouette 9 Cosmetic Bag (P4,500) in black. This last one can also double duty as a laptop carrier.

Shu Uemura's beauty boxes are, as usual, every girly girl's fantasy come true. The white makeup box (P13,995) is solidly built at 11.11 x 9.01 x 10.4.5, and the eight-corner vanity are in iridescent pink petal. Woo very Mod Squad and glamorous!

Those who are on a smaller budget will surely enjoy the Christmas beauty kit offers with goodies inside. The P2,995 kit includes the Fiber Extension mascara and a Rouge G lipstick, plus the famous Shu Uemura eyelash curler, Sweet Lip-gloss, three pieces of 8-ml cleansing oils and Deputa therapy semi-samples.

SHU UEMURA makeup kit

The P2,295 Powerlumière kit comes in a mini-UV under-base Gel protects skin and matches most skincoats except the extremely fair or dark, Classic Cleansing oil in 50-ml size, Lower Gel and a Goldstone Reflector lipstick.

Consumable goodies

A beauty addict won't ever get enough of bath and body products. We go through them like water because unlike the half-baked addicts who only care about their hair and makeup, a true beauty addict considers her body to be her canvas. The scent that wafts from her being is synchronized with the rest of her look for that day.

I recently swapped Issa's Cashmere and Fur-bat brunch and scent gaga over its sensuous. They may be more expensive than usual, but the quality of the scents are so concentrated that merely moisturizing a sap fills the entire room with luscious aromas.

You want to smell divine? Take your pick among the shower gels, body oils, lotions and sprays of the Jo Source spa line, which takes the aquatic theme to a whole new level. I would even choose in the body toner, hair scrub and foot lotions.

JOJOBA OIL

A particular close runners-up is that of the Jojoba line, which comes in an elegant cobalt-blue bottle. After observing I that her cocoa butter massage oil, and the bathroom

just smells divine.

If a beauty addict friend of yours shows a preference for vanilla or milk-based fragrances, get something for her from the Goat's Milk body collection. If she is a classic diva, she'd flip for the festive rose collection, which smells clean, subtle and very feminine.

Or get her the Samsonite Gift drawer liners for her underwear storage area, which is another beauty shrine for many of us.

Other items to check out that have concentrated essential oils and fragrances that take us beyond bath and bedtime are Elizabeth Cornelius, shampoos and shower gels for the aromatherapy-practicing beauty addict) and Origins Ginger Shower is perfect for the warm beauty addict).

(Dickens is exclusive at Rustans, Origins and Shu Uemura are available at Rustan's Department store.

HOMMAGE beauty case

L'OCCITANE Cocktail Privée Candle

GOAT'S Milk Bliss (above); La Source Spa Set (right)